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INTRODUCTION

In his most primitive stages, when he was evolving from the animal state, man was at one with nature. However, in his unity with nature, man was the object of nature in the sense of being controlled by the natural forces. In his pursuit to liberate himself from the realm of nature, that is, to become subject of history instead of object of nature, man discovered labour as a means of transforming and appropriating nature, in the sense of humanizing and accomodating her to man's human nature.

In this pursuit of transformation, man was driven by two contradictory, yet complimentary, activities of the human mind: **Mythos** and **Logos** each representing two dialectically related universes of discourse. The unifying element in these two contradictory activities is the principle of causality. In the case of mythos the logic of causality is irrational and non-scientific, and depends rather on intuition and magic to fill in the gaps resulting from man's actual impotence to control nature due to primitive technology. Through magic man tried to add power to the hunting weapons by an inscription or a charm or a prayer or an invocation of spirits. Logos, on the other hand, is represented by discursive logic, i.e. demonstrative argumentation based on premises and conclusions where the relation between cause and effect is rational.

The history of literature registers a dialectical evolution

from mythos to logos. In this sense, it corresponds to and reflects the evolution of human civilization. Tragedy began in ritual and myth. In his famous definition of tragedy, Aristotle orders the six parts that constitute tragedy by remarking that the plot is the most important of all, the first principle and soul of tragedy. To borrow Aristotle's own term, plot, which in Greek is 'mythos', is the 'prime mover' of drama, in particular, and literature in general. Evidence is provided by primitive ritual drama which evolved out of fertility myths based on the mimetic faculty and sympathetic magic, and developing into magical ceremonies representing in terms of personified forces the abstract ideas of good and evil.

Literature, both oral and written, as one of the essential components of culture, is incorporated in poetry, novel, drama, and embodies a society's cultural values through the social relations between characters and exercises a direct impact on people's consciousness. This impact is exercised through a specific language which is an objectification of a specific mode of thinking and a specific style of life. Hence, the linguistic relations and the cultural relations are synthesized through literature.

The study of such synthesis necessitates the adoption of a kind of integrative method. In my own opinion, one fundamental approach should be adopted combining two organically related aspects of culture and literature, namely, the historical

and the cultural. This historico-cultural approach is the most appropriate for a civilizational perspective which views human civilization as having evolved through man's potential drive to understand, control and appropriate nature for man's ever changing and renewed human needs. It is against this background that literature and culture can be synthesized as a precondition for the establishment of a cultural dialogue through literature.

This civilizational perspective* has to confront some fundamental questions. Starting with the assumption that cultural development is the essential basis for material development, the civilizational perspective seeks to tackle the issue of cultures in conflict or in dialogue between Western industrially advanced societies and Third World societies through literature, being the embodiment of a society's cultural values. This issue will reveal the existence of a dichotomy between two value systems that

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(*) Under the theme "Literature and Civilization" the author organized the Ist International Conference of Literature under the sponsorship of Ain Shams University scheduled for December 1981. The conference had to be cancelled in September 1981 due to overhelming national reasons, on the one hand, and the severe criticism directed against the theme, the content and the organizer of the conference, on the other.

shapes and guides the two levels of civilization. The main question arising then is :

Can the Third World adopt the technology of the developed societies in isolation from the cultural values attached to that technology, anr become real developed countries in the sense of becoming producers, instead of consumers, of technological culture ?

Development being three dimensional: social, scientific and technological, if, then, the answer is in the affirmative, the ensuing question would then be :

How, then, can a cultural dialogue between developed and underdeveloped societies — each representing a level of human civilizatión — be established through a confrontation of the respective cultures ?

However, if, the answer is in the negative, one would proceed further and ask :

On what basis can intercultural contact be established ? Is it on the basis of national and cultural identities, or within one global, civilizational perspective that should both motivate creativity and guide the approach to the producers of such activity, taking into consideration the dialectical contradictions

that govern an essentially dichotomist world society and attempting to supersede them ?

In other words, how can the global perspective transcend the social and ideological contradictions resulting from a class divided society founded on property ownership and exploitation on the national as well as on the international level ?

The early cultural contact between Arabic and European philosophy and science in the Middle Ages proved that Arab scholars and philosophers, who were also scientists, could assimilate Greek civilization and could in turn enrich European civilization in the sense that they provided it with the agents of modern development (e.g. Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle led to the establishment of the school of Latin Averroeism). On the cultural level, such contact led to European Enlightenment which was the foundation of the industrial revolution and modernization. This contact could happen at a time when a common frame of reference shaped and guided both cultures. Since then the common frame of reference has been lost and both cultures diverged into two almost antithetical directions. The rise of Capitalism which produced the phenomenon of colonialism, as a by-product of the socio-economic-political system of capitalist ideology, helped in widening the cultural gap and reinforcing the dichotomy governing the dominating-dominated relationship between European and non-European societies.

At the turn of the twentieth century, is it possible to recapture that lost global civilizational identity within the scientific, technological spirit of the age ? Or will Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism, the modern phenomena of dichotomist civilization manifested by the ideological conflict between the Eastern and Western camps, on the one hand, and the world Capitalist system and Third World countries on the other, be an essential hindrance for the realization of such goal ?

And will the national identity, exhibited in national culture and literature, being a dialectical outproduct of the by-product of capitalist system, namely Imperialism, be an ever present obstacle in the way of realizing that civilizational view ? For instance, the adoption of modernization in the Third World and the preservation of traditional cultural values, especially in the Arab World, proves that modernization is adopted as a technique rather than a style of life and thinking. This is paralleled in literature by the adoption of modern literary forms to tackle traditional cultural values, which proves to be a real hindrance to cultural development.

However, by exploring the role of literature and culture in development within a global context, a national perspective is first sought through which the possibilities of reintegrating the national identity into one global view could equally be explored.

It is within this context that the the essays in this book tackle the role of literature and culture in development through the comparatist approach to Arabic and European literary texts. All the essays have been presented as conference papers at international and regional conferences and seminars from 1979 until 1984. The pivotal idea in the essays is the call for the necessity of establishing a cultural dialogue between European and Third World, particularly, Arab culture by exploring the possibilities of developing a common civilizational frame of reference through the adoption of Enlightenment, understood as the sovereignty of reason, as the minimum level of cultural contact, the maximum being either capitalism or socialism within the context of scientific and technological revolution.

AWDAT AL-ROH AND 1952*

The title of the paper implies two interrelated issues : **Awdat Al-Roh**1 (Resurrection) in relation to social change in a particular period of transition in the history of Egypt. The relation between the two issues implies two factors : one subjective and the other objective. The subjective factor is represented by Tawfik Al-Hakim as a distinguished Egyptian thinker, and the objective factor consists in the social change as reflected by 1952 revolution.

The pivotal idea in **Awdat Al-Roh** derives from the ancient Egyptian myth of Osiris which, in turn, revolves round the idea of "all in one."(2) The reason for constructing his novel on a myth,(3) is the fact that Al Hakim was preoccupied with a major issue at the time he wrote the novel (1925-1927), namely, the quest for the Egyptian personality, Al-Hakim was inspired by the ancient Egyptian civilization, and particularly by the major cultural component of this civilization, namely, the myth.

The two principal characteristic features of the myth i.e.

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* Paper presented at the International Seminar on "Intellectuals and Social Change in the Arab World" organized by the Middle East Research Centre, Ain Shams University, held in Cairo (3-6 December, 1979).

being exemplary and repeatable, have to reflect a vision of the Egyptian personality as static, eternal and unchangeable. This vision is conveyed through the pivotal idea of "all in one", which is treated in the novel on two levels: the abstract and the concrete. The key to an understanding of the novel's content lies in three words that recur throughout the novel: the people, the idol, the revolution.

The first word, "the people'" occurs in connection with the members of an Egyptian middle-class family as an embodiment of the abstract idea of "all in one." In this sense, the individual members of the family, who represent the spirit of collectivity in unity which is inherent in the Egyptian people, are presented as the microcosm which corresponds to the macrocosm or the Egyptian people. This spirit of collectivity, which shapes the relationship between the members of the family, is explored by the author in the first part of the novel through the love affair that each individual in the family shares with the others for Saneiya, a neighbouring lady. In their one-sided love, all are guided by one common motive, namely, the search for the "idol" despite the diversity of their characters and the means of achieving that end. Mohsen the protagonist, is a romantic adolescent who sees in Saneiya a goddess of beauty and love who inspires him emotionally and intellectually, and whom he identifies with the picture of the ancient Egyptian goddess, Isis, in his history book. This purely spiritual, imma-

terial love on Mohsen's part to Saneiya, bestows upon her a divine nature by identifying her with Isis. In this sense, Saneiya is clearly identified with Egypt and her character acquires a double realistic-symbolic nature. Abdou, the student of engineering, also sees Saneiya as the embodiment of beauty and love, though in a less spiritual manner than Mohsen's. The same situation recurs with Selim, the police officer. Driven by pure sensual motivations in his admiration for Saneiya, he soon turns into a hermit who gives up all physical pleasures, devoting himself to the worship of his idolized Saneiya. However, the illusory basis of this love is soon shattered when all find out that Saneiya's feelings lie elsewhere. This love affair, which had at the beginning disrupted the unity of the family, is what unites them all in the end. United in their misery and frustration, all turn to another love, namely, the national patriotic love of Egypt, and devote themselves to the cause of the revolution. Yet, this new unity, which represents their reconciliation to the fact of their frustrated love, is not done on reasonable grounds but on emotional ones because it is motivated by the search for the "idol". The transition from the passionate, subjective love of one woman to the patriotic, collective love of the land is also motivated by the search for the "idol", as an expression of the quest for the Egyptian personality. This new love, however, is not the extension of the unfulfilled love for Saneiya but is rather the integrative alternative to it. Guided by pure mythical thinking in their love for Saneiya, the frus-

trated group of young bachelors are ready to accept the mythic idea of "all in one" as the only alternative to their failure. For them this alternative will establish the cherished "idol" who is the symbol of their ultimate end, namely, all in one.

However, if Saneiya stands for Egypt, how do we account for the severe attack directed against her by admirers after having frustrated their hopes? This attack, in fact, should be seen as a criticism on the author's part of the double realistic-symbolic identity of Saneiya. On the realistic level, the attack is directed against the young woman for having chosen a rich neighbour as a future husband who, in this case, represents the new rising class of national capitalists at the time of 1919 revolution. On the symbolic level, this situation reflects the material side of Egypt and emphasizes the fact that Egypt is not just an abstract ideal but a concrete reality possessing specific economic interests. This critirism also shows that Saneiya, the individual and the symbol, represents a living body that aspires towards integration. However, integration is prevented due to another factor, namely, fragmentation as a result of which the identity tends to disintegrate. In this case, the concrete Saneiya stands for the mutilated Egypt due to foreign interferences Turkish and British, poverty and illitracy. Hence, the only remedy for such disintegration would be the emergence of the "idol". This explains the sudden outbreak of the revolution at the end of the novel as being the sign of the emergence of life

out of death, or the resurrection. Revolution in this sense, was necessary to remedy Egypt's disintegration and to restore her integration. But because Al-Hakim identifies Saneiya with Isis, the former becomes an imitation of the ancient Egyptian goddess, that is, a symbol of Pharonic Egypt which revives the idol, in the same manner, as Isis did with Osiris in the myth by uniting the mutilated body. In this case and in a manner identical to that of Isis's, Saneiya is the cause for reviving another idol, a Cheops who emerges from among the people and who is himself the symbol of the ultimate end : Osiris. In this sense Saneiya as well as the idol are the exemplary and repeatable images of the mythic figures of Isis and Osiris. Whereas Saneiya is a symbol of Egypt, the idol Cheops is the symbol of Egypt's or Saneiya's integration.

The social content implied in the realistic level and concretized in the relationship between Saneiya and Mostafa, the young national capitalist, is soon transformed into a symbolic level with the recurrence of the idea of "all in one". The tension between what is real and what is ideal, which is caused by the mythic idea of "all in one", is eliminated through the absolutization of the myth. Hence, on the abstract plane the social content dissolves and is submerged in the myth.

The idea of "all in one" is further explored and intensified through the transition from the passionate love to patriotism

and revolution in Part II by combining the abstract and the concrete levels of the ideas of "all in one" and the "idol." Here the theme of national patriotism prevails as a counter balance to the theme of passionate love. In the village, the heart of Egypt, Mohsen discovers the essense of Egyptian personality through the life of the peasants. He realises how the peasants are able to survive despite the harsh conditions of exploitation and degradation through the spirit of collectivity which they inherited from their ancient Egyptian ancestors. According to Al-Hakim, this latent spirit has the enormous power of combatting all forces of aggression and exploitation though, on the surface, passivity, tolerance and perseverance may temporarily prevail. This latent and dynamic spirit represents the potentiality for freedom in the sense of man's liberation from death and the restoration or the actualization of the Egyptian spirit. The release of this spirit, however, can only be realized through the "idol" who will emerge from among the peasants and who will be himself the embodiment of the spirit and the ultimate end : Osiris. By uniting the people, the "idol" will realize the idea of "all in one." Freedom, in this sense, is identified with revolution. Consequently, revolution is given a mythical interpretation. It is in this sense that Al-Hakim understood and interpreted the 1919 revolution.

The sudden outbreak of the revolution at the end of the novel, puts into question Al-Hakim's idea of revolution. His

idea of revolution is very clearly expressed in his description of the emergence of the revolution as the resurrection or the restoration of the spirit to the people. That is Al-Hakim's idea of revolution is the reflection of his mythical interpretataion of the national identity of Egypt by reducing it to the ancient Egyptian myth. In this sense Al-Hakim conceives of revolution as a means of social integration within a mythic tradition i.e. in a mythical rather than a scientific sense. Hence, revolution is conceived by him as a spontaneous action with the purpose of reviving the past. According to this interpretation, revolution would be the repetition of the past and the imitataion of a certain exemplary and repeatable myth. Hence, the future is reduced to the past. Consequently, revolution would be guided by a past rather than a future vision. In this sense, social change acquires a curious meaning, which is not change at all, but a repetition of ancient figures and patterns of life. In the same way is the Egyptian personality interpreted i.e. as a repetition and imitataion of the past personality. It is within this vision that Al-Hakim wanted to revive the Egyptian personality, that is, as a reflection of the exemplary and repeatable sacred time of Pharonic Egypt. Hence, the consequences of reviving the myth is fixation of time and a non-scientific circular view of history based on the illusion that the past can be repeated in the present.

The predominance of the myth gives rise to another major

question : why does Al-Hakim, who believes in liberalism, adopt a mythic interpretation of social change and national personality ?

The justification of this ambivalence is the author's insufficient awareness of the philosophy of Enlightenment that accompanied the rise of Liberalism in Europe in the eighteenth century. Enlightenment in the European sense, is sacrificed for the sake of a more authentic and traditional, i.e. mythic, interpretataion of the rise of Liberalism in Egypt in the early twenties of this century. By doing so, Al-Hakim replaces reason, the essence of Enlightenment, by unreason, the essence of the myth forgetting that Enlightenment is opposed to mythical thinking being a movement of the liberation of reason from any external authority by encouraging free, critical thinking.

There are a few instances in the novel where the main aspect of Enlightenment may be detected, namely, in the protagonist's sarcastic remarks on his aunt's superstition. However, due to his own mythical and non — scientific thinking, he is unable to offer an alternative to her superstition. Hence, he is also incapable of treating his own emotional problem reasonably and is, thus, driven to adopt the same superstitious attitude by resorting to the holy shrine of Al-Sayeda Zainab in a moment of despair. In this situation, Al-Hakim quite clearly identifies the heart as the domain of unreason by

stressing the fact that man resorts to superstition as a result of his inability to understand and solve his problems in a reasonable and scientific way. However, this temporary and implicit criticism is soon submerged due to the predominance of the heart (i.e. myth) over reason (i.e. critical thinking). Such an act amounts to an abortion of Enlightenment on the author's part. We may ask : what is the reason for this abortion ? Here we have to mention that superstition becomes a partial expression of the author's mythical thinking. That is to say, superstition becomes a justifiable non-scientific mode of thinking applied to satisfy certain needs which have not yet been satisfied in a scientific way. However, being only a by — product of myth, superstition does not amount to a Weltanschauung. On the other hand, whereas scientific and mythical thinking possess one thing in common, namely, the principle of causality, the cause in the myth is a mythical, unreasonable one. In **Awdat Al-Roh** this cause is the search for the idol.

Al-Hakim's stance towards Enlightenment is problematic, for he had to choose between two alternatives : either to explicitly adopt the philosophy of the Enlightenment and risk the chance of persecution as Taha Hussein had done, or to present it impilicitly through the myth as a kind of camouflaging of Enlightenment. He chose the second alternative due to the predominance of the objective factor (i.e. the persecution of

Taha Hussein and Ali Abdel-Razek by the religious authorities of Al-Azhar in 1925). However, because myth is the antithesis of Enlightenment, Al-Hakim's attempt resulted in the abortion of Enlightenment. This is due to the fact that the author disregarded a major aspect of Enlightenment, namely, commitment to reason which prevailed in Europe in the eighteenth century despite liberalism which meant non-interference of the state and a free economy. Because Al-Hakim was not committed to reason he allowed mythical thinking to prevail, which would be justifiable within the limits of non-committed reason.

Al-Hakim's ambivalent attitude towards Enlightenment appears clearly in the novel through the dialogue between the French Egyptologist and a British civil servant, during which the former praises the Egyptian people the descendants of the Pharoes and founders of a great civilization which he considers superior to Western European civilization. The superiority of the ancient Egyptian civilization, according to the French Egyptologist, who is here the author's mouth-piece, lies in the predominance of the heart over the mind. This is implicit in the language of the ancient Egyptians which combnied heart and mind in one word namely, the heart. Hence, the duality of heart and mind is solved for the benefit of the heart. This dialogue offers the author's intellectual justification for adopting a myth as the foundation of social change and national personality. It

does so by putting forward a number of dualities, the most important of which are the heart-mind and the East-West duality These dualities, however, are mere manifestations of the basic life-death duality which is resolved by the idea of resurrection and eternal life as contained in the myth. Although Al-Hakim acknowledges the heart-mind duality, he resolves it by giving primacy to the heart, dissolving it in the idea of "all in one". However, the ultimate consequence of this resolution, of which the author was unware at the time, is authoritarianism for in this case the idol ruler would not be guided by reason but by passion, the product of the heart.

While admitting the duality of reason and emotion, in which the myth prevails, Al-Hakim calls upon it to perform a social function, namely, to change society. However, due to the abortion of Enlightenment, the attempt to change society failed. Faced with the disintegration of the first resurrection (i.e. 1919 revolution), Al-Hakim looked forward to another resurrection. Yet he did not attempt to revise his idea of revolution, but held on to his mythical understanding of it.

The question that poses itself now is: what have been the repurcussions of this beginning on the present? In other words, in which sense was 1952 revolution inspired by Al-Hakim's views about social change and the Egyptian personality as expressed in **Awdat Al-Roh?** This is the second issue of the

paper. One of the main sources that inspired the movement of the Free Officers in 1952 was **Awdat Al-Roh** as Gamal Abdel Nasser himself admitted in his dedication to Al-Hakim.(4) One might ask : where is the point of contact between 1952 revolution and **Awdat Al-Roh ?** In other words, how can a revolution which claims to be a radical change of social reality, as stated by Nasser in his book **The Philosophy of the Revolution,** be inspired by such a mythic vision of change as that propagated by Al-Hakim in **Awdat Al-Roh ?** By revolution is understood a radical change that is guided by a future vision, whereas revolution according to Al-Hakim means a revival of the past. This incompatibility between a future and a past vision of social change, points to a misunderstanding on the part of the initiators of 1952 revolution of the source of their inspiration. In their attempt to reestablish the Egyptian personality in a modern society, the Free Officers wanted to assert the specifity and authenticity of that personality by holding on to the tradition. Hence, hey adopted Al-Hakim's stance which is based on an interpretation of the Egyptian personality as a static, non-living thing and a view that conceives of history as an eternally self-repeating pattern. The revolution, however, should have interpreted the national personality within a future vision that makes possible the societly's involvement in present-day civilization. This misunderstanding resulted in an optical illusion which made Al-Hakim's past vision look like a future vision that is yet to be realized. Whereas Al-Hakim meant by revolution a

repetition of the past in the sense of the revival of the aborted 1919 revolution, which had failed due to foreign interferences, and not the involvement in a social revolution, the leadership of 1952 understood that he meant a new revolution. Such misunderstanding resulted in non-scientific thinking that, in turn, prevented a reinterpretataion of the national personality on scientific grounds.

What was Al-Hakim's reaction to the disintegration of another revolution which was to a great extent the product of his own ideas ? Confronted with the fragmentation of the revolution in 1967. he realised a shocking fact, namely, that Egypt's defeat was the natural consequence of the worship of the individual. Having learned his lesson this time, Al-Hakim did not continue to perpetuate mythical thinking nor did he call for another resurrection as Nasser had asked in his dedication. Instead, he wrote a book entitled **Consciousness Regained**(5) (1972). This book, which has been wrongly understood as a betrayal to the revolution, is actually an apology for it and a severe self-criticism. By criticising the revolution for having replaced the political institutions by the idol, Al-Hakim was actually condeming his own idea about the idol. For he saw how this idea resulted in the replacement of a stable political system based on autonomous political institutions by a system in which a political elite headed by the leader replaced the people, leading ultimately to authoritarianism.

Consciousness Regained represents an important stage in the evolution of Al-Hakim's thought. Although it reflects his critical attitude to the revolution by tackling the problem, it does not offer the solution. This book, which raised many hot arguments in the circles of intellectuals and on the pages of newspapers and magazines, was the occasion for the historic dialogue that took place in 1975 between Al-Hakim and some representatives of the Egyptian Left. The dialogue reflects a further development in Al-Hakim's position. Answering a direct question put to him : "Do you consider yourself historically responsible ?" Al-Hakim states quite emphatically : "Of course I am responsible. I condemn myself because a free thinker should have never written what encouraged the rise of an idol. Why ? Because the free writer should have been aware of the consequences of the worship of the individual."(6)

One of the major positive consequences of the dialogue is the fact that it helped Al-Hakim surpass self-criticism and find the alternative and form a clear future vision of change. This is clearly manifested in his enthusiastic response to the idea of Enlightenment which evolved through the dialogue. The reason for his enthusiasm is the fact that the idea of Enlightenment corresponded to his own views he had propagated in his articles in the thirties. However, this time his idea about Enlightenment acquired new dimensions which the dialogue helped him discover and of which he was not fully aware in the thirties.

This new dimension is the social implication of the Enlightenment. Commenting on the idea of Enlightenment, he states in a manner of someone who has finally found the solution to a life long problem :

> What we need today is a secular revolution which restores sovereignty of reason and establishes scientific thinking instead of mythical thinking. The battle of secularization of thought and scientific thinking is inevitable because it is what paves the way for socialism, because socialism is based on science and not on superstition... We are faced with two battles : the battle that leads to the victory and sovereignty of reason and scientific thinking which means the predominance of rationalism. After that we can move on to scientific socialism. That is why Marx could not have appeared before the age of Enlightenment, before Voltaire and Rousseau, who had first to support reason and fight against unreason and work for the spreading of a secular epoch. By doing so they paved the way for the scientific, materialist theories of the 19th century. Hence, we want the rational scientific reason to prevail as had happened in the 19th century. In the 19th century there was a complete transformation to scientific reason which in turn led to the 20th century. Therefore, our future is the present of the developed countries.(7)

However, although Al-Hakim admits that Enlightenment passed through two qualitatively different stages, the first being liberal and not committed to any ideology and the second committed to social revolution, he chooses to concentrate on the accomplishments of the eighteenth century Enlightenment and emphasizes the urgent necessity of intellectual more than social revolution. He, thus, excludes himself from undertaking the responsibilities of propagating social revolution, forgetting that Enlightenment leads indirectly to commitment to social change. Al-Hakim's position shows that he is still unwilling to solve his contradiction, namely, adopting a liberal attitude in an age of commitment.

Having realised that the worship of the individual led to a major loss which outweighed any gains accomplished by the revolution, namely the loss of the consciousness of the Egyptian people, Al-Hakim ends his argument in **Conciousness Regained** by posing a question : "Will Egypt ever regain her free consciousness ?" I will do the same and end my papyer by putting a question to Al-Hakim : Are you willing to take the responsibility of restoring the free consciousness to Egypt by writing a new novel to that effect? Although Al-Hakim answered this question in **Consciousness Regained** by refusing to undertake that responsibility under the assumption that he does not possess the sufficient emotional detachment and clarity of vision to do so and which only a young writer from a new generation

can do, the question still remains. Having clarified his vision by adopting the idea of revolution of reason, can he put it into practice by translating it into a literary work which will be the concrete praxis of that idea ?

NOTES :

1. Tawfik Al-Hakim, **Awdat Al-Roh** (Cairo : Al-Adaab Bookshop, n.d.).

2. According to the myth, at the moment of Osiris's birth a voice was heard to proclaim that the lord of creation was born. In course of time he became king of Egypt, and devoted himself to civilizing his subjects. Having made Egypt peaceful and flourishing, he set out to instruct the other nations of the world. During his absence his wife Isis so well ruled the state that Typhon (Set), Osiris's evil brother, could do no harm to the realm of Osiris. When Osiris came again, Typhon plotted with seventy-two comrades, and with the queen of Ethiopia, to slay him, and secretly got the measures of the body of Osiris, and prepared a chest which was brought into his banqueting hall when Osiris was present together with other guests. Osiris was induced to lie down in the chest, which was immediately closed by Typhon and his fellow conspirators, who threw it in the Nile. Finally, the news was brought to Isis, who set out in deep grief to find her husband's body, by following the chest which contained the body of Osiris. Having found the chest

she then hid it in a secret place. But Typhon, one night hunting by the light of the moon, found the chest, and recognizing the body, tore it into 14 pieces, which he scattered up and down throughout the land. But Isis could gather the fragments of Osiris' body. By that time Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, had grown up, and being encouraged to the use of arms by Osiris, who returned from the other world, he went out to do battle with Typhon, the murderer of his father. During the fight which lasted for a long time. Horus was always the victor. According to this myth, Osiris was the god through whose sufferings and death the Egyptian hoped that his body might rise again in some transformed or glorified shape, and to him who had conquered death and had become the king of the other world, the Egyptian appealed in prayer for eternal life through his victory and power. It is through the prototype of Osiris that the doctrine of eternal life was perpetuated in the consciousness of the ancient Egyptian.

3. One of the definition of myth is: "In the language current of the nineteenth century, a myth meant anything that was opposed to reality ... Myth is thought to express the absolute truth because it narrates a sacred history that is a transhuman revelation which took place in the holy time of the beginnings. Being sacred, the myth becomes exemplary and, consequently, repeatable. For it serves as a model and, by the same token, as a justification for all human actions. In other words,

a myth is a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of time and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour. In imitating the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically reenters Great Time, the sacred time." Mircea Eliade, **Myth, Dreams and Mysteries** (London : Collins, 1976), p. 23.

4. In his dedication of his book **The Philosophy of the Relution** to Al-Hakim after 1952, Nasser wrote : "Requesting a return of another soul in the age of the revolution".

5. T. Al-Hakim, **Consciousness Regained** (Cairo : Dar Al-Shuruwq, 1974).

6. **Ibid.**

7. **The Egyptian Left in Dialogue with Al-Hakim** (Cairo : Al-Talia's, 1975).



REVOLUTION BETWEEN REALITY AND ILLUSION*

It is necessary, as a starting point, to define the terms "revolution" and "illusion" and to explain the way in which they are used.

Revolution is a radical change of reality. Thus, it implies a qualitative transformation in the development of society resulting in the replacement of one socio-economic formation by another. Revolution also involves profound changes in the intellectual life of society, in its culture. The main feature of revolution is the transfer of state power from one class to another. This is the primary distinction between revolution and all kinds of coup d'Etat which do not uproot the power of a reactionary class, but merely replace the governing groups or individuals.

Illusion is defined as "an erroneous perception arising from a misinterpretation of sense data because they are produced under unusual conditions of perception, physical, psychological or physiological. Illusion contrasts with hallucination in which

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* Paper presented at the 3rd EASRG International Conference on "Youth, Intellectuals and Social Change" held in Malta (23-29 March, 1980).

the senseous ingredients are totally absent. Illusion is the view that the spatial, temporal external world is merely a veil, Maya, a phantasmagoria; not only is everything illusion, deception, appearance, but existence itself has no real value".(1)

The question attempted in this paper is : What is the nature of the process by which revolution is turned into an illusion ?

The attempt to answer this question will be located in the field of Egyptian literature as a social phenomenon that accompanied the social and intellectual developments in Egypt since 1952.

In view of the fact that literature is one of the important components of a society's superstructure, it both reflects and transcends the social and class consciousness of that society through the dialectical relation between the superstructure and the base. This relation directs the role of literature in a given society in any historical phase, and becomes even more dynamic in periods of radical social change. In this respect literature plays an important role in the development of people's consciousness, and men of letters fulfil this function each proceeding from his own class position which, in turn, determines his social and political allegiance. In this sense, literature is considered a form of social production, and the author of literary works becomes a sociologist. If we accept the definition of sociology

as "a study of society, that is, of the web or tissue of human interactions and interrelation,"(2) and that "literature emerges as both an interrogation and a questionning of reality, the complex of specific men, who, live their lives within specific social groups, to the dominating human, social and political problems of their time,"(3) sociology then becomes the very subject of literature. Hence, "the dialectical relation between the inner world of the literary work and its external existence as cultural artifact,"(4) is what determines the identity of literature, namely, as a cultural component of civilization which should be approached within a civilizational context.

Anyhow, these definitions are used, here, as guidelines to help us in tackling modern Egyptian literature in the twentieth century where it is closely bound up with the historical phase of national liberation. The novel, being one of the early forms of Egyptian literature that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, represented a trend characterized by the quest for the Egyptian personality. The initiator of this trend and the founder of the Egyptian novel, in the exact sense of the term, is the distinguished thinker, dramatist and essayist Tawfik Al-Hakim. Al-Hakim's attempt to explore, and crystallize the Egyptian personality in the field of literature found one of its earliest expressions in **Awdat al-Roh** (The Return of the Soul), a novel written between 1925-27 and first published in 1933, and which had a tremendous influence on other contemporary writers. This

novel is considered the first attempt in Egyptian literature to portray the lives of the Cairene lower middle classes and their sudden awakening to national consciousness after the revolution of 1919. The novel revolves round the idea of "all in one" which is derived from the ancient Egyptian myth of Osiris based on the idea of resurrection and eternal life. Through this mythical idea, the author propagates his views of the Egyptian personality and revolution, proceeding from two key concepts namely, the idol and revolution. The idea of "all in one" revolves round the "idol" the worshipped hero and saviour who emerges from among the people to deliver them from all kinds of oppression, and for whom they devote their entire life in passive and patient waiting. This long-awaited "Godot" has the magic power of transforming people's lots to the better, for he represents the authentic Egyptian personality which incorporates the long tradition of past values and which he will bestow upon his loving people. In a likewise manner, the revolution, as conceived and portrayed in the novel, is a spontaneous action with the purpose of reviving the past. In this sense, the past becomes an ideal image and a past rather than a future vision which guides revolution, and whereby the revolution becomes a repetition and an imitation of a certain exemplary and repeatable, sacred and mythic history. Hence, the consequence of reviving the myth is fixation of time and a circular view of history based on the illusion that the past can be repeated in the present due to the elimination of one of the important dimensions of time, namely,

the future. Due to the absence of a future vision, the present is directed by the past, and history is moved towards that past. The illusion in that case arises from the fact that a past vision has the appearance of a future vision.

The "unusual condition" under which such a false perception of reality turned the notion of revolution into an illusion, was the over-whelming national question that arose as a strong reaction against British occupation in particular and all kinds of foreign interference and domination in general. Under such conditions, national liberation was not clearly differentiated from social revolution. The call in the novel for the emergence of an idolized individual to undertake the revolution is an obvious replacement of the people by that individual. This emphasis on the individual, besides being an indication of the author's liberal and individualistic tendencies, is the result of his mythic vision of revolution. However, taken to its logical conclusion, this vision if realized would result in an authoritarian rule of power which replaces the political institutions, by the individual leader who, ironically enough, becomes a leader without people. In this case, such revolution should be rightly called a coup d'Etat for it lacks one of the basic features of revolution, namley, the transfer of state power from one class to another.

Another basic dimension of revolution is sacrificed in the novel due to the author's mythic vision, namely, reason. The

reason why Al-Hakim, who is a liberal, adopts a mythic interpretation of revolution and national personality is his insufficient awareness of the philosophy of Enlightenment that accompanied the rise of liberalism in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment, is sacrificed for the sake of a more authentic and traditional, mythic interpretation of the rise of liberalism in Egypt in the early twenties of this century. By doing so, Al-Hakim replaces reason the essence of Enlightenment, by unreason which is the essence of the myth, forgetting that Enlightenment is opposed to mythical thinking being a movement of the sovereignty of reason. Hence, because myth is the antithesis of Enlightenment, Al-Hakim's attempt resulted in the abortion of Enlightenment. This is due to the fact that the author disregarded a major aspect of Enlightenment, commitment to reason, which prevailed in Europe in the eighteenth century. Because Al-Hakim was not committed to reason, he allowed mythical thinking to prevail. He, thus,reduced revolution to a mere illusion.

Social revolution before and after 1952 is the theme of the novels of Egypt's most eminent contemporary novelist: Naguib Mahfuz. Mahfuz started his literary career in the thirties with historical romances with ancient Egyptian settings,(5) which manifested the influence of the trend started by Al-Hakim and where the idea of "all in one" was presented as the only solution for delivering the country from foreign oppression. How-

ever, Mahfuz transcended this trend in the second stage of his career which is generally known as that of critical realism and which stretched from 1945 up till 1952.(6) The general feature which unifies the novels of this period is the attempt to criticize the social structure and political institutions that existed in Egypt prior to 1952 by presenting their impact on the social life in the city of Cairo through the social relations and national aspirations of upper middle class and middle class families and individuals. These relations are underlined by the conflict between science and religion which accompanied the social and political developments and represented the two contradictory ideologies that prevailed in Egypt : Marxism and Moslem Brotherhood, and which remained unsolved even after 1952.

The transition from the stage of critical realism to the one generally known as post-realism is a very significant landmark, not only in Mahfuz's own evolution, but also in the history of the Egyptian literature in general. Commenting in retrospect on this period of transition, Mahfuz says: "I had still seven subjects for novels of the same critical realistic trend, when the (1952) revolution occured, and the motive for writing the seven subjects vanished... For when the old society went, every drive within me to criticize it went too. I thought my literary career had come to an end. I had nothing to say or write. I went on like that from 1952 to 1957, and did not write a single word, and felt no desire to write. I considered the matter completely

finished, until I found myself writing **Awlad Haretna** (Children of Gabalawi) which I published in 1959".(7)

This novel is the product of a significant seven-year period of silence during which Mahfuz was closely observing the path of the social and political evolution after 1952. Motivated by a strong aspiration for a genuinely radical social revolution on scientific bases, which the 1952 regime had so far been unable and unwilling to practise, Mahfuz wrote this novel which is based on a religious parable in which he portrayed the evolution of human civilization from a critical interpretation of the theistic world view with the intention of demythologizing it. This secular interpretation of the religious world view reduces the spiritual to the temporal by personifying God, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad in realistic characters possessing human qualities and manifesting social relations implying economic, political and class relations. The author's vision of humanity in its attempts to regain the earthly paradise is determined by these specific relations. In this sense, God and the prophets and the idea of good and evil are demythologized, brought down to earth and purged of all illusions. By using the religious parable as a basis of his novel, Mahfuz both negates and preserves the mythic interpretation of social reality indicating, thus, the dialectical relation between both which proceeds from a dialectical contradiction between two incompatible world views.

Through the parable form the author dislocates the spiritual

dimension underlying the explanation of human relations and locates it in specific concrete relations of exploitation. The relation is dislocated from heaven to earth, from a man-god relation to a man-to-man relation. By dislocating the location and temporality of the parable, the author unfolds the dialectical relation between parable-reality and social reality. To remove the illusion of parable-reality the author suggests the removal of the contradiction between a secular and a religious world view through the adoption of a scientific method, particularly that of scientific socialism, as the only solution of social exploitation. This is the only means by which the illusion of goodness in an exploiting society, which has its roots in labour and production, can be discovered and remedied through an organized, radical change of the whole system that breeds exploitation.

However, this daring attempt was soon aborted due to the interference of Al-Azhar, Egypt's strong and influencial religious institution. Despite his considerable prestige, Mahfuz was forced to publish his novel in Lebanon, having already published it serially in "Al-Ahram", after Al-Azhar's decision that prohibited the publication and circulation of the novel.

Disillusioned by the failure of the 1952 regime to achieve any real radical change, and motivated by a sense of despair at the dilemma of his country, Mahfuz resorted to symbolism as a mask of social criticism whereby he could secure his survival

as an artist, and which became later a common practice among Egyptian authors. This new technique is only a reflection of a turning point in Mahfuz's world view dominated by the idea of illusionism and which may be termed as 'asocial realism'. Hence, the theme of revolution between reality and illusion becomes the dominant theme which constitutes the pivotal idea around which all other issues revolve and which characterizes the present phase of Mahfuz's career. Convinced that Western concepts like "social equality" and "freedom of the individual" have little or no meaning in Egypt, where the authoritarian system of rule allows for no opposition and pays lip service to democracy and political freedom, and seeing that all the so-called revolution has done is redistribute wealth and power among a new élite, Mahfuz regards this revolution as an almost total failure. His interpretation of this failure is presented in a series of novels, from 1961 onwards,(8) revolving round the conflict between illusion and reality. After the abortion of his attempt at enlightenment in which he offered a solution for a radical and total social revolution through the rationalizatin of the myth, Mahfuz interprets the failure of the "revolution" as the inevitable result of the absence of a clear, rational and scientific basis to guide social revolution, together with the overwhelming predominance of religious thinking. In this sense, reality was turned into an illusion, that is, what is real became appearance and evoked the illusion of being real. In other words, Mahfuz saw the socialist measures that began in 1961,

as a radical step of changing social and economic structures, as unreal or as only a quantitative rather than a qualitative change of reality and just an addition to an already existing corrupt structure.

What was considered change from the point of view of the political authority, was seen by Mahfuz as an illusion due to the presence of the illusion of religion which reduced reality to appearance. In this case, the illusion became the substitute for reality and any hope for change was wasted. Mahfuz seems to agree with Freud, who is an important formative influence on the Egyptian author, in his book **The Future of an Illusion** : "...perhaps there is a treasure to be dug up capable of enriching civilization and that is worth making the experiment of an irreligious education. Should the experiment prove unsatisfactory I am ready to give up the reform and to return to my earlier, purely descriptive judgement that man is a creature of weak intelligence who is ruled by his instinctual wishes."(9) In this sense we may interpret Mahfuz's novel (Children of Gabalawi) as an artistic expression of Freud's ideas propagated in this book. Yet, whereas illusion for Freud is connected with neurosis, Mahfuz sees it as a morbid social rather than a neurotic phenomenon.

However, observing the authoritarian evolution of the Egyptian regime and despairing of the possibility of change due

to the inability to solve the chronic conflict between science and religion and the predominance of illusion over reality. Mahfuz gives up his future vision of social revolution, thus, eliminating one of the most essential dimensions of time and limitng his works within present and past issues. He, thus, presents man within a totality of political, economic and social forces which stifle his personal freedom and cause his intellectual and emotional frustration. Hence, the "dialectic between man's freedom and autonomy and the arbitrary compulsions of an external world"(10) becomes the dominant structure of Mahfuz later novels.

The conflict between the individual and society is reflected in the figure of the alienated man who is, in most cases, the intellectual. Hence, Mahfuz's 'hero-in-crisis' can be understood only in terms of alienation. The nihilistic, pessimistic vision of human existence reflects the negative aspect of society's evolution and man's alienation by and from the social order through the political institutions. It also shows that these institutions, installed successively by the regime,(11) have not brought about any change in values to replace old ones, and that the material change achieved through some social measures (Agrarian Reform, nationalization of economy and the socialist measures) was not accompanied by a radical change in moral and intellectual values in the sense that it did not liberate man from the illusion. Hence, man is alienated from his essential

being, being social and political. However, if society is guided by political authority, the extrication of this authority would mean its substitution by the masses and not individual man as Mahfuz suggests.

Yet, leaving the society in a vacuum as Mahfuz does due to his concentration on the individual, is due to the absence of a future vision. For if the political institutions act as an autonomous power that stands above man and governs him, alienation in this case results from man's separation from his products — the political institutions — as well as a result of overlooking the possibility of restoring these institutions to the masses who are its rightful possessors. However, Mahfuz disregards the fact that human emancipation — according to Marx — is possible only when political and social life form one organic whole, and that this is possible only through socialist values when a genuine community replaces domination which is the task of the proletarian revolution.(12) But by eliminating the future and fixing time, Mahfuz eliminates the possibility of change and turns an essentially social and historically transient issue into an ontological problem. Hence, by obliterating the social content and concentrating on the individual hero, he completes (whether consciously or not) the process of abortion of reason, thus, negating any possibility of a revolution. Furthermore, the absence of the future vision of change results in the fixation of the illusion because it preserves the contradiction between illusion

and reality which can only be superseded through a future vision based on a rational and scientific conceptualization of social revolution.

Besides the liberal and social tendencies in Egyptian literature, there has been a literary trend, which particularly flourished in the field of drama, characterized by a serious commitment to socialist ideology. A representative of this revolutionary trend is Nomaan Ashur, an outstanding dramatist whose plays represent a consistent criticism of the social structure through his attacks on the "social ladder" as it was called. The pivotal idea in his plays is the concept of social equality, proceeding from the class concept and class struggle, through the conflict between real revolutionary values and sham ones. **The People Downstairs** (1956) depicts the sharp contradiction between "the people downstairs" and those who live or, in the course of the play, move upstairs. The play is a fierce criticism of the social ladder which encourages individuals to compete for a higher status up the ladder, a race considered unworthy of a supposedly socialist society. Ashur visualizes a new Egypt in which the corrupt past values are discarded and in which feudalism, capitalism and the leisured aristocracy can no longer find a place. He is quite explicit in his rejection of those whom he considers corrupted by past values and, at the same time, has a clear vision of an alternative society without class barriers.

Conceived as a counterpart to **The People Downstairs, The**

People at the Top (1958) can also be considered revolutionary since it rejects the possibility of reconciliation between the ex-governing class and other classes in society. Ashur does not believe in the good will of the upper class, nor does he think that the new Egyptian society can absorb the leisured aristocracy: hence came his firm conviction that they should be eliminated. This play was written at a time of sober disillusionment when the difficulty of solving the problem of society without radical measures had been appreciated. Hence, this play was the first expression in the post-1952 Egyptian literature of the attempt to build a classless society through the complete elimination of the last traces of feudalism and capitalism.

Ashur's most outstanding play **The Family of the Straight Man** (1963) is a landmark in Egyptian drama. It satirizes bitterly the "post-revolution" society. Through a middle class family, the author criticizes the inability of this class to adapt itself to changing social conditions. This play, which is a satire on some social foibles and an attack on those people who claim to be straightforward while in practice they are not, is actually an indirect attack directed at the regime's policy which always dissociates words from deeds and which pays lip service to socialism, while in practice it is far from being genuinely socialist. The attempt to clothe social criticism in symbolism is also a feature of Egyptian drama of the early 1960s which indicates that although the post-1952 society created conditions

in which political drama could develop freely, the reaction against political orientation was so strong that playwrights seized upon symbolism as a means of expressing their own views.

From the foregoing it becomes clear that the unifying element in the various literary trends, despite their disparity, is the conflict between illusion and reality incarnated in the contradiction between the scientific and the mythic solution of social problems. The conflict between science and religion is an ideological dichotomy that still poses an unsurmountable problem to both right and left-wing tendencies. This dichotomy stems from the original two objectives that motivated the Free Officers movement in 1952, namely, indepedence and modernization. Both were considered as synonymous terms signifying the freedom from dependence in all spheres: political, economic as well as cultural and intellectual, with the intention to establish a new and modern Egyptian identity. The two issues connected with this dichotomy were national liberation and the establishment of a socialist society. Egypt, being culturally and economically a backward country, suffers from the same problems faced by all developing countries, semi-colonialism, backward rural economy, domination of social reactionary forces and exploitation of foreign capital. Culturally, the proletariat on the whole are illiterate and unenlightened due to the absence of two important historical phases — Reformation and Enlighenment — which shaped and caused the development of human civilization in the West

The question now is :

How does a country like Egypt whose social and economic backgrounds are largely of the nature of a developing country, cope with the two major problems; national independence and a radical change of the social and economic structures along socialist lines ?

The Egyptian regime, under the leadership of Nasser, wanted to change a society based on authenticity both economically and culturally into a modern society. In other words, as Egyptians the Free Officers were faced with the problem of authenticity and, motivated by the wish to change society, they had to find the solution in modernization. Faced, however, with the dilemma that the ideologies implied in modernization are not locally made, and, unwilling to commit itself to any universal ideology, the regime resorted to "retraditionalization", a term which denotes "a process in which Egypt is moving away from cultural dependency and is regaining her own identity".(13) This has been confirmed as early as 1953 with the proclamation of the republic when a socio-economic manifesto, published by the Liberation Rally in July, advocated a political system that would be different from either Fascism and Communism or Capitalism and 'modern Socialism.(14) Hence, Nasser's ideology of Arab Socialism based on the Arab cultural and Islamic tradition and the concept of Arab Nationalism are a manifestation of the prodominance of authenticity over modernization.

The relation between authenticity and modernization is problematic for it implies an inherent contradiction arising from the wish to modernize society in accordance with world trends of development on the one hand, and an unwillingness to give up traditional past values on the other, or the question how to become modern without losing identity. In this sense, identity is seen within a past rather than a future context. The solution of this contradiction, however, should be based upon the nature of the development of human civilization which is marked by two steps that indicate the spirit of modernization : the first step is the religious Reformation whose major achievement is secularization, and the second step is Enlightenment which asserts the sovereignty of reason and of which the French Revolution is the symbol. Hence, secularization, embodied in the Reformation and sovereignty of reason embodied in the Enlightenment, are the true spirit of modernization. Sovereignty of reason, however, entails commitment of reason towards the change of society, and commitment of reason implies secularization.

Authenticity, on the other hand, is a term often used in developing countries to distinguish its national identity, and it is a counterattack of imperialism which has alienated these countries from Western civilization. As a reaction to imperialism, national liberation movements identify their policy of decolonization with that of dewesternization as a factor of alienation that has separated it from the traditional cultural roots

without giving it a satisfactory substitute. This realization produces an increasing search for national culture to bring it into the picture of modern world. The Egyptian regime's position towards modernization manifests a strong rejection of religious reformation and an adherence to authenticity which shows itself in the attempt to rediscover the cultural past of Egypt objectified in the ideology of Arab socialism.

As a result of this nationalistic attitude, social revolution was considered only as a corollary of the two main goals independence and modernization, on the assumption that an independent and strong nation will automatically abolish social injustice. This is an absolute negation of the active role manifested by the dialectical relation between the superstructure and the base which pushes society forward towards radical social change. On the one hand, it freezes the relation between the base and the superstructure, as a result of which the superstructure does not respond to the needs of change that arise in the base. By response is meant the provision of the theoretical and ideological bases, necessary for any successful radical change in society, by the superstructure.

If we view revolution, not only in terms of class struggle and economic factors, but within a wider civilizational context, it then becomes a manifestation of development. That is, as the continuation of previous revolution which aimed at the liberation

and humanization of man, with the purpose of achieving the non-alienated reason which would lead to the establishment of an identification between reason, nature and society. Hence, if all revolutions which aimed at the humanization of man must be put in a civilizational context, revolution cannot be conceived without the incarnation of Enlightenment. In fact, Enlightenment becomes an indispensable condition for revolution as history has witnessed in the French Revolution and Russian Revolution.(15) Hence, the crucial role of literature. However, literature can either impede or enhance revolution depending on the civilizational context in which it is put. It can either foster and nourish or abort Enlightenment. Here lies the civilizational role of the intellectuals, and specifically men of letters, namely to promote the liberation and sovereignty of reason as a civilizational necessity. The absence of the civilizational context of social revolution, however, creates the illusion of a contradiction between national and social liberation which can be only removed through the intellectuals' role which is a dual role: liberation of reason (necessary for national liberation) and commitment of reason to social revolution. In this manner, the intellectuals transcend the limits of their nation and epoch and achieve universal and human dimensions. The philosophers and men of letters of the Enlightenment belong now to a civilizational trend after having fulfilled their role which was then a direct necessity of social revolution. Hence, they become not only effective but indispensable for any social revolution. The elimi-

nation of this dimension can only create illusion of revolution rather than genuine ones.

Asked how he would rate his own books in relation to European literature, Mahfuz said "they were probably, like the rest of modern Arabic literature, fourth or fifth rate," adding that he did not suppose many Europeans would be interested in modern Arabic literature as it has produced only such writing. He supposes that the reason for this is that literature is formed by its social context and by the attitudes of its readers, and that, since Egypt is still undergoing the industrial and social revolution which Europe passed through a hrundred and fifty years ago, Arabic literature must use the technique and subject-matter of the nineteenth century."(16) This view of Egypt's most distinguished and popular novelist confirms the differentiation between two levels of civilization, the developed and the underdeveloped, and places Egyptian literature within the context of underdeveloped countries.

The terms "developed" and "underdeveloped" which are generally used to denote a socio-economic status of a certain country, are in fact, civilizational terms which comprise all fields of human knowledge. Hence, they also apply to the field of literature which is not an isolated phenomenon but is closely interrelated to the socio-economic conditions. This special pattern of the underdeveloped level of civilization reveals a

certain asymetry betwen the two levels of civilization. The criterion of differentiation betwen these levels is not only economic or industrial, but cultural and intellectual in which literature plays an important role in indicating the asymmetry.(17) Therefore, in reaction to the trend which gives priority to economic factors and industrialization as the major criterion of differentiation between socio-economic and cultural structures, we suggest the terms "enlightened" and "unenlightened" societies instead of "developed" and "underdeveloped" to indicate the symmetry and asymmetry of the two levels of civilization.

Concluding we remark that Enlightenment, as an indicator of civilization, becomes the distinguishing feature of social revolution which sets it apart from national liberation movements. Such movements stop short of achieving a radical change of the socio-economic structure of society due to the absence of Enlightenment, and become only illusions of revolution. Without this dimension the illusion will be perpetuated.

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2. R. Ginsberg. **The Study of Society** (ed.) Bartlett (London, 1939), p. 436.

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4. **Ibid.**

5. These novels are : **Abath al-Aqdaar** (1939), **Radopese** (1943) **Theban Struggle** (1944).

6. To the novels of this period belong : **New Cairo** (1945), **Khan al-Khalili** (1946),**Middaq Alley** (1947), **The Mirage** 1948), **Beginning and End** (1949), and the Trilogy (1956-57), Dates attached are those of first publication.

7. F. Dawwara, "Rihlat al-Khamsein" (Journey of the fifties), al-Katib January 1963, p. 17. Quoted and translated by Hamid Sakkut. **The Egyptian Novel** (Cairo, 1971), p. 115.

8. The novels that represent this stage are : **The Thief and the Hounds** (1960), **The Woodcock and Autumn** (1962), **The Road** (1963), and **The Beggar** (1964).

9. Freud, **The Future of an Illusion** (London, 1975), p. 52.

10. Swingewood, **op. cit.**, p. 37.

11. The first of these institutions is the Liberation Rally in 1953 (Hayat al-Tahrir) which was meant to provide an institution that would publicize the junta's orders and crystallize people's adhesion to them, and the National Union which replaced the Liberation Rally in 1957 and which eliminated many old candidates, and the Arab Socialist Union in 1962. M. Rodinson observes that these successive changes do not reflect an inability of either the Egyptian people or the regime to establish stable political institutions, but reveals rather a constant desire to set up an organization that comes closer to an ideal authoritarian one-party system. Mahfuz seems to agree with this point of view. M. Rodinson, "The Political System," **Egypt Since the Revolution** (ed.) P.J. Vatikiotis (London, 1968), p. 105.

12. Marx, **Early Writings**, (London, 1969), pp. 30-31.

13. F. Buttner, "The Retraditionalization of Egypt's Policy", **Orient**, vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1979), p. 54.

14. Rodinson, **op. cit.**, p. 98.

15. Enlightenment, as a necessary step towards socialist revolution, is stated by Engels: "Modern socialism is, ...in its theoretical form... a more developed and allegedly more consistent extension of the principles laid down by the French philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Like every new theory, modern socialism had at first to link itself with the intellectual data ready to hand,

however deeply its roots lay in material economic facts" **Socialism : Utopian and Scientific** (Peking, 1975), p. 45.

16. Fowels, Introduction to **Miramar** (trans.) F. Moussa (London, 1978), pp. XVI-XV.

17. In a paper presented at the First Conference on Islamic Philosophy held in Cairo in November 1979 under the title "Islam and Secularization", B. Tibi bases his argument on the idea that modern societies, that are socially developed, represent "functionally differentiated systems", and that secularization which is the achievement of religious reformation, is not an act of will but a mechanic by-product of the emergence of modern industrial society in Europe.

AN EGYPTIAN LITERARY PERSPECTIVE OF THE RURAL WOMAN

In this paper three novels are selected as models representing a contemporary Egyptian perspective of the rural woman. The three novels are :

Zainab by Mohamed Hussein Haikal (1914)

The Call of the Curlew by Taha Hussein (1934)

The Taboo (al-Haram) by Youssif Idris (1958)

The reasons determining this selection are twofold : one, the fact that these novels, written by some of Egypt's most prominent thinkers and men of letters, rank among the few novels that have a literary merit, which tackle the problem of rural woman and have a rural area for their setting. The second, more important, reason is the common feature that unites the three works. The unifying element is the concept of the "taboo" which determines the theme and content of the novels and which serves, at the same time, as the guiding principle in the study and analysis of the novels.

Paper presented at the International Seminar on "Rural Women and Development", Middle East Research Centre, Ain-Shams University, held in Cairo (1-4 December, 1980).

The main question attempted in this paper is :

How far do these novels disclose, through the concept of taboo, the rural socio-cultural values in Egypt that determine the rôle of the Egyptian rural woman ?

The answer to this question leads to two basic questions: What is taboo ?

What is the social function of taboo within the Egyptian rural socio-cultural context ?

Freud defines taboo as :

"For us the meaning of taboo branches off into two opposite directions. On the one hand it means to us sacred, consecrated: but on the other hand it means uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean... taboo expresses itself essentially in prohibitions and restrictions"(1).

About the violation of taboo Freud says :

"Originally the punishment for the violation of a taboo was probably left to an inner, automatic arrangement. The violated

1. Sigmund Freud. **Totem and Taboo** (London : **Penguin,** 1940), pp. 37-38.

taboo avenged itself... In other cases, probably as a result of a further development of the idea, society took over the punishment of the offender, whose action had endangered his companions... The violation of a taboo makes the offender himself taboo".(2)

Freud goes on to say:

"The moral and customary prohibitions which we ourselves obey may have some essential relation to this primitive taboo the explanation of which may in the end throw light upon the dark origin of our own "categorical imperative"(3)

Emile Durkheim in 1915, five years before Freud published his book Totem and Taboo, had dealt with the socio-religious implications of taboo and had formulated them through the concept of the sacred, substituting the word taboo, which is of Polynesian origin, by the more scientific word "interdiction". In his book **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,** Durkheim defines the sacred as:

"By definition, sacred beings are separated beings. That which characterizes them is that there is a break of continuity between them and the profane beings. Normally, the first are

2. **Ibid.,** pp. 39-40.
3. Freud, op. cit., p. 43.

outside the others. A whole group of rites has the object of realizing this state of separation which is essential. Since their function is to prevent undue mixings and to keep one of these two domains encroaching upon the other, they are only able to impose abstentions or negative acts. Therefore, we propose to give the name **negative cult** to the system formed by these special rites. They do not prescribe certain acts to the faithful, but confine themselves to forbidding certain ways of acting; so they all take the form of interdictions, or as is commonly said by ethnographers, of taboos(4)

About the implications of religious belief upon taboo and the notion of the sacred, Durkheim writes :

"...a system of religious interdictions... is one which separates... all that is sacred from all that is profane. So it is derived immediately from the notion of Sacredness itself, and it limits itself to expressing and realizing this. Thus it furnishes the material for a veritable cult, and even of a cult which is at the basis of all the others; for the attitudes which it prescribes is one from which the worshipper must never depart in all his relations with the sacred. It is what we call the negative cult. We may say that its interdicts are the religious interdicts par

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4. Emile Durkheim, **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life** (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1976), pp. 229-300.

excellence. They rest upon the principle that the profane should never touch the sacred".(5)

Summing up, Durkheim says: "In a word, religious interdictions are categorical imperatives.(6)

We notice, through the almost identical use of terminology, the close affinity between Freud and Durkheim. While the former concentrated upon the psychological aspects of taboo, the latter exposed its sociological basis. Both scientists, proceeding from their analysis of primitive societies have reached complementary conclusions that could be the basis of a so-called psycho-sociological formulation of the concept of taboo. Durkheim's notion of the sacred, by adding concrete socioligcal dimensions to Freud's psychological analysis, extends the notion beyond the mere primitive religious boundaries. Hence, the sacred becomes a more general notion transcending time and place and attaining the stature of an absolute.

The foregoing definitions are used here as guidelines to help us in tackling the key concept in three novels, namely, taboo in its various socio-religious roles bearing directly upon the cultural values of a certain society.

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5. **Ibid.**, p. 302.
6. **Ibid.**, p. 301.

Having answered the question what is taboo, I will then attempt to relate it to the next question, namely, the social function of taboo within the Egyptian rural socio-cultural context, through the three selected novels.

The auther of the first novel, **Zainab**, is one of Egypt's most leading intellectuals and politicians in the 1930s and 1940s. He was a member of parliament representing the Liberal Constitutionalist party. He wrote this novel during his stay in France to study for a doctoral degree in law. Infatuated by Jean Jacques Rousseau's political ideas and inspired by the romantic aspect of the French philosopher's theory of the social contract and social justice, Haikal wrote his novel which is an expression of his utter nostalgia for his homeland.

The plot of the novel revolves round a frustrated platonic love affair between a rich landlord and a poor peasant girl working on his farm on the one hand, and another frustrated platonic love affair between the same peasant girl and a poor peasant whom she cannot marry because her parents marry her off to a well-to-do peasant. The novel is dominated by the strong sense of taboo restrictions felt by all the characters: the rich landlord, who is probably the author himself, brought up in an aristocratic family, lives and receives his education in the city. Driven by an instinctual desire, which is the result of sexual frustration, he starts a short-lived love affair with the

peansant girl. However, due to class restrictions coupled with a deeply rooted religious sense of guilt, he resents the girl and seeks the marriage of his rich cousin. The hero's strong sense of religious taboo manifests itself when he resorts to the sanctuary of a local saint to purify himself from sin. Hence, myth represented by the practice of superstitious rites i.e. the hero's visit to the sanctuary, which itself is one of the elements of separating the sacred from the profane, is one way of fixing taboo. On the other hand, the more strongly felt domination of the taboo in the novel is represented by the heroine's eventual death as a result of contracting tuberculosis. Sickness and ultimate death are the inevitable punishment by some mythical power on the violater of taboo. Social punishment, however, had long before preceded when she was forced to abandon her lover.

The heroine's tragic end and the hero's succumbing to superstition reflect the triumph of taboo and the maintainance of what Havelock Ellis calls "social opinion". Ellis further explains the social function of taboo by saying: "It is indeed only the existence of such taboos which enables us to possess any sacredness of personality at all"(7). It is no mere coincidence that Ellis uses the word "sacred", formerly used by

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7. Havelock Ellis, **Morals, Manners and Men** (London : Watts and Co., 1942), p. 48.

Durkheim, to prescribe it as one of the basic fundamentals of saving society from disintegration.

Hence, the domination of the mythical aspects in Haikal's novel that result in the fixation of the "negative cult" of taboo, are clear manifestations of the author's inability to assimilate the essence of Rousseau's ideas of social justice. Haikal overlooks the basic principle of Rousseau's social theory of the social contract, namely to establish a society on a secular and civil basis, by eliminating myth and supernatural elements and appealing to reason as the only legitimate power for the establishment of the new society of fraternity, equality and liberty. The Egyptian author, being a devout Moslem, eliminates Rousseau's frame of reference that determines the basis of a liberal society, substituting it by his own frame of reference, and narrowes the French philosopher's theory down to a mere glorification of nature.

As for the form of the novel, one notices that by encouraging the fixation of taboo, Haikal rejects critical thinking which is an essential step towards the elimination of taboo. Hence, the fallacy that Haikal's style is strongly influenced by the sytle of French romanticists could be easily refuted if we attempt an analysis of the language of the novel. The novel is written in the grand style of Classical Arabic, full of embellishments and decorum. It becomes, thus, a dogma i.e. not

a means to an end but an end in itself. Hence, the vague, undefined lenghty passages, which are wrongly identified as romantic descriptions, are a mere reflection of the dogmatization of language which is the formal expression of the conservative content of the novel.

The second novel, **The Call of the Curlew,** is written by Taha Hussein, a leading figure in the fields of literature, politics and education. He is one of Egypt's few intellectuals who succeeded in assimilating the essence of European civilization and who attempted to transfer the intellectual products of that civilization first through translation of masterpieces of Greek philosophy and literature, and second through the application of Cartesian method on local intellectual problems.

Being himself from a rural background, Hussein attempts to record in this novel a chronic problem that is deeply rooted in the Egyptian rural cultural heritage, namely, the crimes of social shaming, that is, killing of girls and women who cause shame for their familities for having violated their honour which is the honour of the family and, thus, of the whole clan. In other words, these crimes are social sanctions imposed upon the violater of taboo.

It is believed that this crime is the only means of washing

away the shame and restoring the blemished honour to the family and, hence, to the clan. This tribal tradition definitely has its origin in some folk myth which probably goes back to pre-religious times. Though it is tempting to trace back the anthropological origins of this tradition, it cannot be undertaken in this short paper because it would be out of its scope. However, it could be attempted on some other occasion.

The plot of the novel pivots round an unaccomplished act of revenge attempted by a young peasant girl on the urban, civil man who violated her sister's honour causing, thus, her murder on her uncle's hands. The long quest for revenge ends with love between the peasant girl and the urban engineer, a love which purifies both, she from her desire for revenge and he from his animal instincts. This culmination, however, is the result of a long process of accumulation of experience which the naive peasant girl undergoes. The most important of these experiences is her education with the help of her young mistress, the daughter of the commissioner of police in whose house she works as a housemaid. The knowledge that the illiterate peasant girl gains from books purify her from primitive, mythical thinking and evoke her intellectual faculties. She responds favourably, even surpasses her mistress. She becomes no longer interested in reading books about legendary subjects, but seeks only books with serious rational content.

In this way the auther expresses, through the character of his heroine, the actualization of rural women's potential capacity to assimilate the intellectual products of civilization. She is able to absorb the core of that civilization ie. reason. The author, thus, proves that the cultural alienation of rural woman has reduced her to an inferior being unable to control her destiny. The class nature of this cultural alienation is made clear in the novel through the heroine's act of stealing the books from her master's library. Here the inability of intellectual appropriation is closely linked with private property.

Having raised her consciousness, thus, the heroine finally ends up as a house-maid in the house of her target of revenge. The hatred of the heroïne for her sister's ex lover is soon turned into a mutual love-hate relationship in which love ultimately triumphs. Yet her deep emotional bond to her sister, probably coupled with a deeply-rooted tribal allegiance, prevent her from enjoying her love and, finally, lead to separation from her lover. The act of rape and the murder of her sister, which were both committed in the past, will forever haunt her and determine her future. The violation of the taboo and the punishment are the forces which separate the profane, i.e. the girl's natural love for the young man, and the sacred i.e. the preservation of taboo or the archaic, tribal prohibitions that regard such love as taboo.

Here taboo acts as an element of fixing social classes. It

cannot be overcome by love or by intellectual appropriation of the master's culture. However, the author stops short of offering any alternative vision of change. He only points to the steps leading to that change, namely, the elimination of superstition and mythical thinking through appropriation of the intellectual products of human civilization. On the level of emotions he is for human emotions instead of animal instincts, for love instead of hatred and aggression, though these alone cannot bridge the gap between classes. The fact that love alone cannot unite the lovers, proves that the author does not regard it as a solution to the problem.

The love between the urban engineer and the rural peasant girl, and the heroïne's departure to the city, point to the fact that the "negative cult" of the village, perpetuated through the preservation of backward values, can only be overcome by surpassing the rural traditions both economically and culturally to the urban society with all its virtues and vices. The author makes it clear through the class and social differences between the heroine's family and those of her masters' that the rural cultural values and social relations have an intellectual content. Consciousness of that content, however, as well as consciousness of the causes of class differences necessitate the intellectual appropriation of the expropriated and alienated masses. The first step towards realizing this appropriation is the application of reason and the elimination of superstitious and mythical thinking. However, the novel adds a new di-

mension to the author's vision of enlightenment through the concept of taboo. The dead end with which the novel closes is the raison d'être of the whole work through which the author wants to tell his readers that the fundamental obstacles of changes consist in taboo which relies on archaic, primitive thinking and archaic social relationships which produce backward cultural values that hinder any social change.

The author's treatment of the novel's theme is characterized by one major element, namely, ambivalence, that is, "tendency to be pulled psychologically in opposite directions as between denial — affirmation, acceptance — rejecetion, love-hate".(*) Ambivalence is also the basic emotion associated with taboo.

The very title of the novel, **The Call of the Curlew,** epitomizes the ambivalent emotion in its relation to taboo. The call is first heard by the heroine at the same moment when her sister was being murdered in the wilderness by her uncle. The bird and his call are, thus, fixed in her consciousness as a call for revenge and implant in her the ambivalent love-hate emotion. Love for her murdered sister, the victim and violater of taboo at the same time, and hatred for he who tempted her

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(*) A **Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological Terms** (London, Longman, 1958.

sister to violate the taboo. The recurrent call of the bird evokes in the heroine the ambivalent emotions which almost tear her into pieces. The divided self of the heroine during the moments of suffering from ambivalent emotions are very adequately conveyed through the language of description. The bird, the concretization of the ambivalence, and his call, another concretization in sound, become a sex totem which is identified with the tabo prohibition.

The violaters of taboo, the heroine's sister and her lover, become themselves taboos. The call for revenge upon the sister's violater becomes a sacred, almost divine, mission to which the heroine has to submit herself completely. When she is at the point of violating that self-imposed taboo by falling in love with her sister's lover, she hears the bird's call. The eternal reminder of taboo, the sex totem, will forever be the absolute, sacred being which will separate the world of the lovers, i.e. the profane, from that of the sacred i.e. the world of taboo.

The last novel entitled **Taboo** or **Al-Haram** is to my mind the most effective of the three in conveying the concept of taboo. The original Arabic title of the novel, **Al-Haram,** is most adequately translated into taboo. In his original anthropological research entitled **Growing Up in an Egyptian Village,** Hamed Ammar differentiates between the two notions of al-haram, or the forbidden, and al-halal, or the permitted :

Two words which have a distinctly religious flavour. Alongside the sanction of social shaming (ar), the notion of al-haram is another strong sanction for condemning a person who violates any of the prescriptions of the Quran or any moral or social norm.(8)

Besides the heavy Freudian and Durkheimian connotations implied in this deffinition, the novel entitled **Al-Haram** is an almost ad verbatum translation, in literary terms, of the psycho-social, religious concept and function of taboo as defined by Freud and Durkheim. The plot revolves round the consequences of an act of rape to which a very poor and wretched peasant woman is exposed, and the implications of these consequences upon the society.

One day the small village wakes up to find a recently born baby strangled and floating in the canal. The quest for the murderer, which puts every single woman under suspicion, ends when the murderess and mother of the strangled baby is located among the drifting seasonal peasants who come from another village and who are, therefore, called by the village natives "strangers" or more adequately "the estranged". The woman, who is the breadwinner of the family after her hu -

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8. Hamed Ammar, **Growing Up in an Egyptian Village: Silwa, Province of Aswan** (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1954). Ph.D., p. 73.

band's long sickness, trying to hide the consequences of an act of rape to which she had been subjected, ultimately dies of birth fever after going back to work the next day after delivery in the open air. The woman's death, to the astonishment of everyone, brings about the reconciliation between the "estranged" peasants and the village natives after a long and deeply-rooted antagonism. This reconciliation is epitomized by turning the dead peasant woman into a saint and her death place into a sanctuary to be visited by all women villagers seeking fertility.

The contribution of this novel lies in the broad social perspective with which the author invests the problem of sex taboo. Here the socio-economic basis of the taboo is exposed and sexual frustration and deprivation are shown as being the out-products of social and economic deprivation resulting from exploitation. However, the class nature of exploitation is overshadowed in the novel by the classless nature of taboo. Sexual taboo puts every woman in the village under suspicion. Hence, it is a transcendence of class differences. The death of the victim, who is the violater of taboo at the same time, is an expiation for all the committed sins, as well as the potential corruption inherent in the village people.

The death restores the balance to the village and saves it from disintegration by restoring the violated morals and norms. It is the social punishment that turns the violater of taboo into

a taboo symbolized by the idolization of the dead woman. By doing so the profane act committed by the violater of taboo is turned into a sacred thing and is elevated to the level of an absolute. Hence, rape becomes one particular case of separating the sacred from the profane being the result of interdiction. It separates the profane world, that is the world of daily exploitation, and the sacred, that is that of sex taboo. Consequently, the fixation of taboo is equalled by an analogous fixation of class exploitation. The act of rape and its consequences, which were a threat to the society because they exposed it to disintegration, resulted in the separation of the sacred from the profane and ultimately achieved the preservation of the sacred through the preservation of the "negative cult".

The socio-religious implications of taboo associated with the act of rape in the novel are represented through the symbol of sweet potato which the heroine seeks for her sick husband and which leads to the rape. Here another form of taboo emerges, namely, taboo on food. It has a double social and religious role: on the one hand, it has religious connotations because it recaptures the original violation of food taboo committed by Adam and Eve. Hence, violation of food taboo leads to violation of sex taboo and both lead to severe punishment. On the other hand, the more concrete social aspects of the food taboo are implied in the sex symbol of sweet potato. It becomes, thus, a sex totem that reflects sexual as well as economic deprivation.

and both are a reflection of social exploitation. However, due to the fixation of taboo prohibitions and absolutization of the sacred by separating it from the profane, the possibility of the elimination of exploitation is totally absent.

From the foregoing analysis of the selected novels, it becomes evident that a certain unity of perspective characterizes them. This unity consists in the fixation of mythical, cultural values through the absolutization of taboo. The idealistic, individualist treatment of the three authors of the problem of rural women ignores the material fact of the rural woman's active participation in production. In other words, the authors do not conceive of the rural woman as a productive agent of society but rather see her only as a passive object for sexual consumption. Thus, woman as a subject of history and agent of social change is reduced to a mere object who succumbs to the authority of "public opinion" represented by taboo prohibitions and is unable to control the processes of society nor lead it to any change. By glossing over the socio-economic content of the rural setting, the authors make the social content of their novels a negative one. The result is the rural woman's alienation from her essential being, being social and political. Furthermore, by presenting the women as individuals versus society, the authors reduce the historical significance of their role in social production to psychological problems, such as sexual repression. The treatments point to the world outlook of the

respective authors and their understanding and attitude towards the problem of taboo.

By fixing backward cultural values, the authors help preserve the backward consciousness of their literate reading public. Their works propagate false consciousness by conveying a bourgeois idealist vision of the rural woman. They project their own class consciousness and class relations upon the rural setting and rural social relations through their own consciousness of the rural ways of life and production. The result is this fixation of backward socio-cultural context within which they assign the social role of rural woman, which is doomed to be eternally backward. By concentrating upon one element in the treatment of the rural women namely, instincts and emotions which are basically static, the authors eliminate the dynamic factors which are responsible for change both economic and cultural. In other words, they turn an essentially dynamic and changeable problem into an ontological, static and human problem. They do so through the absolutization of taboo.

The literary prespective of rural women conveyed through the three novels puts the problem of development within a civilizational context, that is, economic development within civilizational values. The novels discussed here strongly reveal the asymmetry between two levels of civilization, namely the European and the Arabic, through the content and form, of the Eu-

ropean and the Egyptian novel form. The fixation of taboo in the consciousness of the public via the rural setting and rural values which disclose a backward, archaic life style and way of thinking, contribute towards the preservation of the asymmetry between the two levels.

Consequently, the Egyptian novel becomes problematic and contradictory. It implies a paradox between the content and the form. Whereas the form is European, which incorporates and reflects a secular world view and an industrial society based on the sovereignty of reason, the content of the Egyptian novel is mainly derived from a rural society whose cultural values are mythical incorporating a tradition opposed to reason and regarding man as a slave of the elements of nature. Hence, if we were to draw up a set of characteristics to distinguish the European from the Egyptian novel form, the main sets of differences would be:

Egyptian novel	**European novel**
rural society	industrial society
religious	secular
absolute	relative
permanence	change
mythos	logos
sacred	profane
nature controls man	man controls nature

The question that poses itself at the end is :

How can this contradiction between two levels of civilization be removed ?

In other words, until when will the subject of the backwardness of the rural life and rural woman within an industrially advanced civilization be the dominant issue in the Egyptian novel ?

My answer to this question implies a future vision of change which consists in the secularization of the content of literary works. This can realize the integration of both content and form and remove the contradiction underlying the Egyptian literary works until the present time. Furthermore, the secularization of the content is the most adequate means to eliminate the cultural obstacles that still hinder civilizational development. Here emerges the crucial role of the intellectual and man of letters in eliminating archaic, underdeveloped cultural values radically and to substitute new ones that cope with civilizational development.

The models I have tackled in my paper have given a negative answer to the above raised question. Thus, the last question with which I will conclude my paper is :

Is there any real hope for a radical change ?



DIALECTICS OF VIOLENCE AND THE SACRED

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARABIC AND BRITISH LITERARY TEXTS

The title of this paper implies two problems: one conceptual and the other methodological. Through the definitions of the concepts of violence and the sacred, the paper provides a conceptual framework within which our comparative study of Arabic and British literary texts will be implemented.

Violence and the sacred, being the key concepts in our study, will be methodologically analysed and interpreted through the dialectical method relying upon the laws of dialectics and the spiral movement.

In his intensive panoramic analysis of the evolution of civilization, Freud concludes:

> ...the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man, and it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization... This aggressive instinct which we have found alongside

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> with Eros and which shares world-dominion with it... the meaning of the evolution of civilization... must present the struggle between Eros and Death as it works itself out in the human species. This struggle is what all life essentially consists of, and the evolution of civilization may therefore be simply described as the struggle for life of the human species.(1)

Thus, Freud's psycho-analytic view involves an implicit distinction betwen aggression, which is a latent and natural human disposition, and violence, and places aggression in **a priori** state. Hence, violence in Freudian terms becomes a specific form of aggression acquired at a certain stage in the evolution of civilization, and could be called a form of neurotic aggression. This stage marks the transition from the "state of nature" to the "civil state" to quote Rousseau's words. In Freudian terms, also, violence is the hallmark of neurotic civilization created through the quantitative accumulation of natural aggression resulting in a qualitative shift to destructive, institutionalized violence. The ultimate consequence of such cumulative process is the self-negation of civilization through its self-induced surplus of aggression and violence, and the ultimate triumph of Death over Eros.

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1. S. Freud, **Civilization and its Discontents** (London, 1975), p. 59.

Freud's explanation of the evolution of civilization is inverted by Marx and Engels who see labour, and not the instincts of love and death, as the driving force behind the process of civilization. According to them, man in the realm of necessity, when he was virtually enslaved by nature, used his specifity as an **animal rationale** to produce tools and weapons which he used as instruments to liberate his species from the restraints of nature in the animal kingdom. This human drive to transcend necessity to freedom, through a rational recognition of necessity, is aimed at appropriating nature, i.e. to control and change nature for human ends. This positive drive to humanize nature through labour, which has been the distinguishing mark of the evolution of human civilization, has had a negative aspect. When man transformed appropriation from the realm of nature to society, the original relation of man versus nature, in pre-agricultural economy, has shifted to man versus man with the emergence of property relations within agricultural society. Hence, subjugation of man by man replaced man's control of nature. The relation of subjugation was, thus, institutionalized in the state which, in Max Weber's definition, is the rule of men over men based on the means of legitimate, that is allegedly legitimate, violence."(2)

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2. M. Weber, **The Power Elite** (New York, 1956), p. 171.

Hence, Engels' explanation of the phenomenon of violence subordinates it to economic and political power within a concrete socio-economic formation that is characterized by the subjugation of man by man:

> The role played in history by force as contrasted with economic development is therefore clear. Firstly, all political power is originally based on an economic and social function and increases in proportion as the members of society become transformed into private producers through the dissolution of the primitive community, and thus becomes more and more alienated from the administrators of the common function of society. Secondly, after the political force has made itself independent as against society and has transformed itself from its servant into its master, it can work in two different directions. Either it works in the sense and in the direction of normal economic development. In this case no conflict arises between them, and economic development is accelerated. Or it works against economic development, in which case, with but few exceptions, force succumbs to it.(3)

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3. F. Engels, **Anti-Duhring** (Peking, 1976), p. 234.

Force here is used to translate the German word "Gewalt" which equally denotes violence anh power. This introduces the intimate relationship between violence and power which is a relation of subjugation between two unequal parties.

But, Hannah Arendt distinguishes power from violence :

> **Power** is never the property of an individual : it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with... disappears, "his power" also vanishes...
> **Violence** is distinguished by instrumental character. Phenomenologically, it is close to strength, since the implements of violence, like all other tools, are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of their development, they can substitute for it.(4)

Furthermore, Arendt distinguishes between power and violence:

> Indeed one of the most obvious distinctions between power and violence is that power always stands in

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4. H. Arendt, **On Violence** (New York, 1969), pp. 43-44.

> need of numbers, whereas violence up to a point can manage without them because it relies on implements... The extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All. And this latter is never possible without instruments.(5)

Hence, violence is instrumental to preserving and maintaining economic and political power.

However, in my opinion, what constitutes the legitimacy of power is not violence per se. For, as Rousseau remarks, "the strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty."(6) Hence, violence is placed within the context of law and order, or a specific set of rules that determines and regulates the relationships and dynamics of power. Here arises the moral dimension implied in the issue of violence and which is complementary to power. In order to transform obedience to power into duty and legitimize it, a certain moral code that permeates all society should legitimize the use of the means of violence.

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5. **Ibid.**, p. 46.
6. J. J. Rousseau, **The Social Contract and Discourses** (New York, 1977), p. 169.

Here, a question arises: What is the nature of this moral code?

According to Rousseau, it is conventions, "since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men."(7) And what Rousseau understood by "conventions" was further elaborated in 1929 by Walter Lippman:

> Although it may be that no convention is any longer coercive, conventions remain, are adapted, revised and debated. They embody the considered results of experience: perhaps the experience of a lonely pioneer or perhaps the collective experience of the dominant members of a community. In any event they are as necessary to society which recognizes no authority as to one which does.(8)

To my mind, conventions, as thus understood, correspond to the much older and more widely used terms: taboo and traditions. In an article entitled "The Function of Taboos" Havelock Ellis writes:

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7. **Ibid.**, p. 170.
8. W. Lippman, **Preface to Morals** (London, 1929), p. 300

> Yet taboos remain as essential in human life as in life generally. They are a part of tradition and it is difficult to say that tradition, though always growing and changing, is any-where non-existent or that life would be possible without it... The adoption of a taboo, whether or not by modifying it, is exactly an adaptation to the environment, in accordance with tradition.(9)

The social form which taboo takes is called by Ellis "social opinion" which transcends law and order, or the legal institutions, and acts as an effective deterrent against violation of the social order. The "social opinion", according to Ellis, is to "enable us to possess sacredness of personality... preserve our more refined sensibilities (and) preserve us from being murdered outright."(10)

It is not by mere chance that Havelock Ellis uses terms such as taboos and sacred, for these express the parlance of human sciences and manifest a certain unity of human knowledge. It was Emile Durkheim who first attempted to analyse and interpret the socio-cultural content of the network of taboos under the more general concept of the sacred.

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9. H. Ellis, **Morals, Manners, and Men** (London, 1942), pp. 45-46.
10. **Ibid.**, p. 48.

Dealing with the social implications of religious belief, formulated in the concept of the sacred as opposed to the profane, Durkheim writes:

> All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic they presuppose a classification of all things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words **profane** and **sacred.** This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought; the beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers which are attributed to them or their relations with each other profane things. But by sacred things one must not understand simply those personal beings which are called goods or spirits...(11)

Durkheim, thus, arrives at the following definition of religion:

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11. E. Durkheim, **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life** (London 1976), p. 37.

> ...a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.(12)

About the implications of the notion of sacredness upon religious beliefs, Durkheim adds:

> ...a system of religious interdictions, ...is one which separates ...all that is sacred from all that is profane. So it is derived immediately from the notion of sacredness itself, and it limits itself to expressing and realizing this. Thus it furnishes the material for a veritable cult, and even a cult which is at the basis of all the others; for the attitude which it prescribes is one from which the worshipper must never depart in all his relations with the sacred. It is what we call the negative cult. We may say that its interdicts are the religious interdicts **par excellence**.(13)

From the above selected texts, the notion of the sacred, according to Durkheim's definition, is related to taboo which

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12. **Ibid.,** p. 47.
13. E. Durkheim, **op. cit.,** p. 302.

existed before religion in primitive societies as a form of the sacred through the mystical world view. It performed the social function of separating the profane, i.e. daily life, from the sacred or the divine. The advent of religion turned taboo into religious interdictions, and thus the sacred became the basis of religions. Hence, religion is the dividing line between the sacred and the profane, which are two opposed worlds, and keeps them from encroaching upon each other. However, the purpose of this separation is to realize social solidarity; that is, it is the safety valve that protects society against "anomic suicide." Even today, after secularization, the notion of the sacred imposes itself, for it functions equally in secularized as well as non-secularized societies It, thus, regulates the relation between the religious aspects of taboo in non-secular societies, and the aspects of taboo in secularized societies.

Consequently, being more general than religion, the notion of the sacred serves as the mediator between the religious and the secular world views. Whereas Freud wished to eliminate the religious dimension and preserve the secular one by scientific education, Durkheim proposed the notion of the sacred which is the **Aufhebung** of the contradiction. **Aufhebung** in its double negative affirmative sense of preserving and eliminating signifies in this case that the sacred preserves the minimum of religious elements and transcends the secular. In other words, it elevates the contradiction between the religious and the secular to a higher level.

Having, thus, defined the concepts of violence and the sacred, I will now move to the second issue in this paper, namely, that of methodology. The methodology applied in tackling the two key concepts is incorporated in the laws of the dialectical method. The unity between the three laws of which dialectical method consists is represented by the spiral movement, which means that the development moves not in a straight line but in a spiral, so that the ultimate point coincides with the point of departure, but on a higher level, each coil denoting a more developed state. Thus, this spiral movement implies continuity and discontinuity, or a combination of both the line and the circle, and the combination of both produces a new synthesis, i.e. the spiral movement.

According to the spiral movement and the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, the unity is inherent in the continuity which is implied in the spiral movement The struggle is between progression and regression, and progression again; the process of regression, however, results in further progression if the shift is of a qualitative and not a quantitative nature. In this sense the movement takes place on a higher level. This process upwards is reinforcel by the law of negation of negation, so that the higher form negates what the previous higher form has negated in an **ad infinitum** process.

Proceeding from the foregoing definitions of violence and

the sacred, I will attempt to locate them respectively in Arabic and British literary texts. Starting with Arabic literature, I have selected for analysis **al-Farafeir** (a coined pseudo-name for slaves), a play by Youssif Idris, a contemporary Egyptian dramatist, novelist and essayist. The title evokes the pivotal concept of the play which is the master/slave relationship, or man's subjugation by man, as a manifestation of violence, incorporated in the act of enslavement.

Two characters, one called master and the other slave (Farfour), present the evolution of human civilization through the history of subjugation and violence by performing their roles respectively according to the prescribed text of the "author", another character in the play. In order to act the role of the master, the actor has to choose a slave whose function is to work for the master. The slave's task starts by selecting a name for the master, then a work, and finally a wife. The name which the slave selects is "Master", being his function and thus the most appropriate name. The work agreed upon after much trouble, is that of undertaker being, according to the author, the only sensible thing to do in a world that begins and ends in death and in which existence is existence-for-death. At a certain point in the play the master resorts to violence by killing a man in order to keep his business going. This is an act which he has to perform himself since the slave refrains from doing it. However, this crime is what initiates an aura

of violence taking the form of systematic wars of masters, on the one hand, and wars of slaves on the other, starting from Thotmoses to Alexander the Great, Napoleon, down to Hitler and Moussulini, and the Huxos, Spartacus, Antar and Abou-zeid al-Hilali. After a temporary rebellion on the side of the slave against the master, during which they experiment to exchange roles or even to abolish either slave or master, they are finally reconciled to the master/slave role having failed to find an adequate solution to this eternal problem.

In the light of this development, Idris' vision of the origin of enslavement combines the historical (i.e. secular) and the mythical (i.e. religious) perspectives (the religious perspective is incorporated in the analogy between the first crime committed by the Master and the original crime committed by Kaine). Such combination of the two perspectives is achieved through the concept of the sacred with the intention of absolutizing the master/slave relationship. The historical-secular perspective proceeds from the idea that the master/slave relation is the product of division of labour into mental/manual on the ground that the rightful masters are the mentally superior, since they can successfully mastermind the labour process, while manual labour is preserved for the mentally inferior, or slaves. Hence, the slave's wife tries to persuade him to accept his role by the following argument :

It is true that you do all the work. But he (Master)

> also uses his brain in order to employ you. Therefore, he who works with his brain is the master, and he who works with his body is the slave.(14)

What unites these opposites is the labour process and the inferior status of the slave is determinel by his economic dependence on the master. Furthermore, the essential division is considered by the author as the origin of all conflict between civilizations, primitive and technologically advanced. Hence, confrontation of civilizations is seen as the highest form of master/slave relation.

Idris never questions the master/slave relation, but takes it for granted. In other words, he picks up where Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** left off, from the established state of enslavement. That is, he accepts the relation of subjugation for a fact, and goes even further than Defoe to the point of denying the possibility of its elimination. When the master and slave die at the end of the play and are turned into atoms, the master, becomes the proton and the slave the electron which revolves round the proton. Hence, the slave keeps unwillingly revolving round the master who is turned into a "system". In this way, the revolving movement, by being systematized, is fixed, absolutized. Relying upon the absolutization of the master/slave

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14. Y. Idris, **al-Farafeir** (Cairo, 1974), p. 230.

relation, Idris sanctions violence by rendering sacred the state that gives rise to it.

On the other hand, the play conveys a sacred view of history. This is done through the equation of the use of violence as a means of sustaining a certain system, with the original crime in the theological context. Hence, the author turns a historical fact into a divine truth. This absolute truth is the sacred which the author tries so wholeheartedly to defend against any change. He, thus, maintains that subjugation will persist in any kind of system, whether liberal capitalist or socialist (which is, according to the author, state capitalism), because the master/slave relation is a supra-historical and an extra-social phenomenon, i.e. an ontological problem. Labour, according to him, is also turned into an ontological problem.

Hence, one of the characters in the play states: "In order to exist, men must eat. And in order to eat, they have to work. And in order to work, there must be master and slave."(15) Through this ontological-biological view of man, enslavement becomes a concomitant of human existence. That is, an insoluble problem, and violence, in this case, is permissible for it becomes a legitimate means of preserving and sustaining the state of enslavement to fulfil the ontological-biological ends.

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15 Y. Idris, op. cit., p. 249.

Thus, subjugation of man becomes an unquestionable natural phenomenon (i.e. taboo) and is, therefore, elevated to the level of the sacred. In this sense, the secular and the religious social systems are unified and the unifying element is the sacred. However, the author forgets that the first act of enslavement took place in order that the slave should work for the master's benefit. This benefit, derived from the slave's labour, is realized through the slave's production by his labour more than the master has to give to the slave to keep him fit for work. Hence, violence, incorporated in subjugation, becomes a means to a more fundamental end, namely, economic exploitation.

The author also deliberately evades the simple fact that not everybody is served by a slave, and that in order to become a master and to be able to employ a slave, one must first possess the tools of enslavement. Hence:

> ...a certain level of production must have already been reached and a certain inequality of distribution must have alrealy occured before slavery becomes possible. For a slave-labour to become the dominant mode of production in a whole society, a far higher increase in production, trade and accumuation of wealth is needed.(16)

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16. F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

The other fact which is ignored by Idris is that subjugation is not rooted in the division of labour into mental and manual but in private property which determines this division. Hence :

> The subjugation of man to mental service in all its forms presupposes that the subjugator has at his disposal the means of labour through which alone he can employ the person placed in bondage and in the case of slavery, in addition, the means of subsistence which enable him to keep the slave alive. In all cases, therefore, it already presupposes the possession of a certain amount of property in excess of the average.(17)

Furthermore, the author overlooks a major fact, namely, that violence can be instrumental to realizing man's liberation, not only his enslavement. Closely related to that fact is another, namely, that not all philosophy is speculative and that history furnishes us with examples where philosophy provided the theoretical basis necessary for any revolutionary change. A more rational and objective look at the history of the major revolutions : the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution, corborates our view.

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17. Engels, **op. cit.**, p. 212.

The theme of subjugation through the master/slave relation is treated within a much wider civilizational context by the Sudanese writer Taiyeb Saleh in his famous novel **Season of Migration to the North.** Here subjugation is treated on a higher level through the theme of cultural subjugation and confrontation of cultures in a post-colonial era.

The story takes place in a small southern Sudanese village. Through the narrator, we are introduced to the protagonist, Mostafa Saiid, a stranger who migrated from Khartoum and settled in the small village. Having once been an exceptional child, particularly gifted in the English language, Saiid becomes the adopted child of the British colonial authorities who undertake the responsibility of making him a world figure by involving him in their culture. Due to his infinite ambition and thirst for knowledge, coupled with an innate sense of rootlessness, Saiid achieves the highest level of academic profession and becomes a world figure. The protagonist suffers from an incurable lack of emotion and a latent animalistic instinct that shape and guide his behaviour. Besides his reputation in the academic field, the hero secures for himself, through his verility, fame in the field of sexual relations. This leads him, after numerous relations, that result all in the suicide of his women victims, to murder his English wife. The hero finally ends up in the small Sudanese village and leads a primitive life of a simple peasant. At the end of the story he

drowns in the Nile, or commits suicide, and his body sinks deeply in the Nile and is never found. He is eternally united with the roots of his own culture.

The novel represents the confrontation of cultures, through the confrontation of the sacred and the profane as two distinctly opposed and antagonistic worlds. The first world (the sacred), referred to in the novel as the South, incorporates the traditions and conventions that govern life in the Sudanese village. The second world (the profane), referred to as the North, represents the culture of the West as that of the colonizer. Due to his unemotional disposition, the protagonist responds to the profane and discards the sacred world. The negative and tragic impact of this choice, according to the author, is total submission to the colonizer.

Subjugation through acculturation, according to Saleh, is an act of violence that should be removed by violence. Whereas Idris considers the transformation of human being from subject into object through the master/slave relation an act of legitimate violence, Saleh thinks that such an act of de-humanization should be violently reacted against. In this sense, **Season of Migration to the North** is a literary translation of Fanon's statement: "decolonization is a violent phenomenon"(18) Here decolonization could be replaced by deculturalization.

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18. Fanon, **The Wretched of the Earth,** (London, 1973), p. 27.

Since Saleh treats subjugation within a civilizational context, the master/slave relation takes place on the level of cultural confrontation. He, thus, rejects the culture of the master colonizer as being a tool of subjugation, and the alternative is a return to the roots, i.e. the traditions and conventions on grounds of preserving the cultural identity and authenticity against the modern West.

However, the author seems to overlook the fact that in a post-colonial era, the challenge facing any developing country (the former colony) is radical reconstruction of society and the basis of such reconstruction should not be cultural confrontation but a creative assimilation of the products of human civilization with the purpose of appropriating it for the development of society. This creative assimilation realizes the continuity between all cultures and achieves an integration of human civilization free from subjugation.

Creative assimilation also requires a certain level of cultural competence that enables the various cultures to contribute towards the integration of cultures. Lack of such competence reduces the developing countries to mere consumers rather than producers of culture. This situation restores the former master/slave relation on a higher level that encompasses economic, political and intellectual subjugation. Consequently, the conflict between producers and consumers creates a psychic crisis on both

sides because it proceeds from false consciousness which produces a self-made illusion that dominates the outer and inner life of both parties. This illusion determines the image of each party vis-à-vis the other: It is a sick image because it derives from a false consciousness that is mediated through the master/slave relation.

Due to the false consciousness, the problem of cultural identity, whether that of the East or of the West, and authenticity versus modernization become illusion, pseudo-problems that are in fact a defense mechanism used to protect a certain culture against the violation of the other one.

The essence of African identity, advocated by the author, lies in the dominance of cultural religious values. This poses the problem of the secular versus the religious as two opposed versions of the sacred. For to achieve radical social change in the twentieth century the opposition between secular and the religious should be eliminated through, either religious reformation or enlightenment. Hence:

> The transition to modernity is assisted by either Calvinism (religious reformation) or by the Enlightenment... In Catholic Orthodox culture the characteristic symbiosis is between the rationalistic variant of the Enlightenment and its historized (that is, Marxist)

> variant. In short the secularizing potentially occurs either through Calvinism plus the Enlightenment or the Enlightenment plus its historicized variant.(19)

Whereas this transition has been realized in the West through the elimination of the opposition between the secular and the religious worlds, it has not yet been achieved in the East. One of the main results of the absence of such elimination is the advocacy of a return to primitive traditional cultural values within a sacred context. This advocacy is the essence of the "negative cult" which is dramatically reflected in the novel through the acts of murder and suicide.

In the author's opinion, what prevents cultural integration and realizes a break in the continuity between cultures is what he calls "the germ" of civilization when he decribes the culture of the colonizer. This "germ" of Western culture is violence. This unhealthy mark of post-industrial societies is transplanted to the East via the acculturated Saiid. Thus, the peaceful East which is the product of the river culture, is infected with the disease of the West : violence. This is clear from Saiid's wife's murder of her second husband. The only safety valve, the immunity against this lethal disease and the saviour, the author seems to say, is traditions (here lies the significance of the hero's

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19. D. Martin, **A General Theory of Secularization** (Oxford, 1978).

death by drowning in the Nile). Hence, the absence of traditions and the presence of the lethal disease open the door to the crisis of cultural confrontation which finds its outlet in violence and sex.

Through the related themes of eroticism and violence, the master/slave relation is psycho-analysed, and reaches its climax in the love/hate relation between the hero and his English wife which culminates in the violent act of murder/suicide induced by the wife. This violent outlet, which takes the form of two murders in the novel, reveals an accute feeling of alienation. The two crimes correspond to the two unequal levels of culture and confirm their incompatibility. Both violent acts, however, are motivated by a murder/suicide wish with the purpose of eliminating the self through eliminating the other. Both crimes are the tragic culmination of the conflict between two ambivalent emotions : self-preservation and self-elimination. Whereas the first crime (Saiid's widow's murder of her second husband) is committed in self-defence against a backward pattern of cultural values which reduce a human being to a mere object, the second crime (Saiid's murder of his English wife) is also an act of self-defence, yet against a more advanced pattern of culture which nevertheless, violates one's humanity. During the murder Saiid dies and is reborn: his profane alter-ego (the westernized version) dies and his sacred self (the traditional Eastern) is reborn. The ritual murder achieves the break

of continuity between two mutually exclusive cultures, and ultimately the sacred world triumphs through the dominance of traditional cultural values. This corresponds to the tragic confrontation of cultures which, according to the author, can only culminate in the elimination of one culture by the other.

The author admits that when he wrote the novel he was under the influence of Freud.(20) However, what he takes as Freudian theory is only a partial idea of Freud, the Eros/Thanatos conflict, which he inflates to look like the whole in order to construct a novel on it. This falsification of Freud narrows his theory down to erotic determinism and overlooks the essence of Freud's theory and its significance in the history of human thought. Freud wished to eliminate the mind/body dichotomy (which initiates from the essential secular/religious dichotomy) through scientific education. Ignoront of this fact, the Sudanese author, who thinks that he is influenced by Freud, advocates the opposite of what Freud has always advocated, namely, adherence to religious traditions as a solution of the love/death conflict which will rescue neurotic civilization from self-destruction. The author, however, fails to look deeper into Freud and hence could not see the origin of the neurotic conflict between love and death. He, thus, regards the symptoms as the disease and proceeds from the illusion to diagnose the anti-dote.

20. T. Saleh, Interview with Foda al-Husseini, **Taiyeb Saleh** (Beirut, 1976), p. 215.

which is his Sudanese traditions. These traditions, prevented from being reformed or enlightened, take the shape of taboo. Consequently, violence, as an inevitable outproduct of taboo, a means of protecting the sacred against the profane, has been sanctioned.

Within this analysis of the novel, one could say that the author's method of thinking is non-dialectical which, in turn, prevents him from creatively assimilating the culture of the West. Instead he prefers to isolate the two worlds, the East and the West, on the grounds that they can never meet.

Now, the question is : Is he right in isolating the East from the West ?

In order to answer this question one has to expose models of men of letters from the West. To achieve this purpose I have chosen William Golding's **Lord of the Flies.**

The pivotal concept in Golding's novel, which recurs throughout most of his works, is human nature which he tackles from a moralistic perspective. In his famous article, **The Fable,** Golding comments on the idea of his key work **Lord of the Flies :**

> ...anyone who has lived through the years of fascist savagery and does not realise that man produces evil

as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head.(21)

Golding sees his task as a writer helping mankind to understand the true nature of man. He, thus, speaks of man's innate greed. cruelty and egoism :

> I believed then, that man was sick—not exceptional man, but average man... to many of you this will seem trite, obvious and familiar in theological terms Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept theology and admit the tritenes: but what is trite is true.(22)

Lord of the Flies is set in a future atomic war with 'the reds' as the enemy. A party of English private schoolboys, ages ranging from six to twelve, are being evacuated when their plane is shot down over the Pacific. They climb out of the crash to find themselves on a desert island paradise with coral reel, palm trees, lagoon. The rest of the story is about how this paradise is turned into hell by the nature of the boys themselves. Discipline starts to break down. One of the children is ritually

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21. W. Golding, "The Fable", **The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces** (London, 1965), pp. 85-101.
22. **Ibid.**

slaughtered, and another is pushed off a cliff. Then there is a savage manhunt. Finally help arrives with the British Navy. The book closes with the boys in tears at the feet of an officer and a group of people who have landed to save the boys and restore law and order.

In the same article, **The Fable,** Golding attempts to persuade the reader that the basic theme of **Lord of the Flies** may be applied to all of human history. He describes the novel as being a fable about a group of civilized boys who find themselves shipwrecked on a desert island in the middle of the ocean, and about their return to an animal state. These schoolboys try to construct a civilization on the island, but it falls apart because the boys are inexorably human, i.e. evil. Golding's biological conception of man is compatible with the theological concept of original sin. His portrayal of the characters highlights the idea that man is by nature an animal, motivated in his behaviour by his evil nature which is given to sin and violence, and that the only solution for that dilemma is God's mercy. Golding's purpose behind this portrayal is to warn people against their evil nature.

However, if Golding is against the violence produced by the evil human nature, he welcomes another kind of violence, namely that of the establishment, as a legitimate means of preserving society against disintegration. The forces of the esta-

blishment: the church, the police, law, the conservative party, the Queen, are the only humans who do not suffer from the disease of being human. Therefore, their violence is not evil but benevolent because it will realize what Havelock Ellis, who is perfectly in line with Golding's thought, calls "social opinion." What is more, the forces of law and order, by repressing human nature forcibly and violently, will preserve the system against irrational, destructive violence.

Golding's argument about human nature being eternally evil, aims at sustaining the class to which he belongs and its interests. This is justified by his contradictory argument about the use of violence. Golding suggests that, by nature, human beings are violent. Yet, what stops them from practicing their violent ins-intícts are the authority figures the absence of which leads to chaos and destruction.

However, what Golding presents as eternal, as part of human nature, is in fact only temporary and a feature of the British ruling class. The instinct of violence is nothing but a kind of defense mechanism used by the state to reinforce its authority. Hence, by combining religious morality (through equating human nature and original sin) with politics, Golding sanctions the use of violence as a means of preserving the status quo.

The second British author tackled here is the dramatist

Edward Bond who represents a trend diametrically opposed to that of William Golding. Bond is a non-religious humanist whose works represent a critique of the destructive impact of the alliance between religion and political power. This critique incorporates a systematic attack on a frame of mind given to religious thinking objectified in systems, political, social and psychological and inflicting violence and destruction everywhere. Although Bond's plays are full of religious ideas, "he writes about religion as superstition, as a specific fantasy generated by a culture and consolidated in individual minds, whose function is to cope with material fears and anxieties."(23) Bond could never, since his childhood, understand the basic contradiction of Christian belief which legitimizes violence nor could he rationalize it. Recollecting his childhood experience of religious faith which is rooted in religious fear, he says : "...terrified to think God was love, and he killed his son for us and hung him up and tortured him and washed us in his blood."(24)

Consequently, Bond bases his critique of violence upon its relation to religion and law and order. In other words, he treats socially sanctioned violence as a socio-moral issue, namely, the morality of law and order which he describes as "one of the steps taken to maintain injustice," because it is the moral sanc-

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23. T. Coult, **Edward Bond** (London, 1977), p. 22
24. E. Bond, Interview, **Theatre Quarterly,** vol. II, No. 5, Jan.-Mar. 1972.

tions of "an aggressive social structure which is unjust and must create aggressive social disruption."(25) In his manifesto-like preface to his play **Lear,** Bond makes the following statement :

> I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society, and if we do not stop being violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence.(26)

Bond's critique of violence raises the problem of means-end, and shows violence as a product of history distinguishing, thus, between "historically acknowledged, so-called sanctioned violence and unsanctioned violence."(27) The first kind of violence is harmless and necessary for human evolution, while the latter, which he identifies as an amalgamation of technology and socialized morality, is a characteristic feature of repressive authority which suppresses man's freedom and destroys his humanity. He writes :

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25. E. Bond, Preface, **Lear** (London, 1972), p. vii.
26. **Ibid.,** p. v.
27. W. Benjamin, **Reflections** (ed.) P. Demetz (New York, 1978), p. 279.

> The predator hunting its prey is violent but not aggressive in the human way. It wants to eat, not destroy, and its violence is dangerous to the prey but not the predator. Animals only become aggressive—that is destructive in the sense—when their lives, territory or status in their group are threatened, or when they mate or are preparing to mate. Even then the aggression is controlled. Fighting is usually ritualized. and the weaker or badly-placed animal will be left alone when it runs away or formally submits. Men use much of their energy and skill to make more efficient weapons to destroy each other, but animals have often evolved in ways to ensure they **can't** destroy each other.(28)

Among Bond's plays I have selected **Narrow Road to the Deep North** as a representative model of his treatment of the theme of violence and religion. The play tells a story of the rise and fall of a city state. It is set in Japan "about the seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries"(29), and proceeds from an ancient Japanese parable. The story is represented by three main characters who constitute the centres of influence in the

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28. E. Bond, **op. cit.,** p. v.
29. E. Bond, **Narrow Road To the Deep North** (London, 1973), p. i.

play : Basho, the Buddhist poet, Shogo, who is a despairing non-believer, and Georgina, the Christian missionary politician. Basho is involved in the rise of Emperor Shogo, the tyrant ruler. However, outraged by Shogo's disrespect for religion, Basho appeals to a British Expeditionary Force to colonize the city. Shogo leads an abortive counter-coup, during which violence is indiscriminately used by both sides, and the city remains under British authority.

Narrow Road is about social morality when it becomes a form of violence. In this sense, social morality is represented in its double form : the secular and the religious. The ideology of religious morality maintained by two forms of repressive authority, the secular and the religious. In this sense, social secular morality is identified with religious moralty as forms of violence and suppression of man. But Bond points out that the initiators of such order eventually fall victims to it because "their social morality denies their need for justice, but that need is so basic it can only be escaped by dying or going mad."(30) This is dramatically implemented through the characters of Shogo, Georgina, Basho and Kiro, Shogo, the tyrant, and Georgina the agent of imperialism, are caught in the web of the contradiction of the system which they have created and maintained. Georgi-

30. E. Bond, **Lear, ed. cit.,** p. v.

na admits bluntly to Basho that she uses a specially converted religious morality as a tool for political authority:

> ...instead of atrocity I use morality. I persuade people — in their hearts — that they are sin, and that they have evil thoughts, and that they're greedy and violent and destructive, and — more than anything else — that their bodies must be hidden, and that sex is nasty and corrupting and must be secret. When they believe all that they do what they're told they don't judge you — they feel guilty themselves and accept that you have the right to judge them.(31)

Georgina's final madness is the inevitable solution of the contradiction inherent in the ideology of imperialist authority. She is overcome by the fusion of political power and religious faith through the idea of sin to include people's sense of guilt in order to make them easily controllable. Having raised guilt, she falls prey to it because she is unable to distinguish between religious faith which uses guilt as a tool of repressive authority and political power.

Shogo represents an authority without orthodox religious faith. Although he is heedless of religious sanctuary, he places

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31. E. Bond, **Narrow Road, ed. cit., p. 97.**

himself at the centre of his own sacred world. In other words, Shogo turns himself into a god and his city becomes for him god's divine will realized. He tells Kiro: "I am the city because I made it, but I made it in the image of other men. People wanted to follow me— so I had to lead them. I can't help shaping history — it's my gift, like your piety."(32) The people in Shogo's city are similar to the masses in contemporary society whom Bond describes as "waking sleepers who do not know dream from reality."(33) Shogo's proclamations are typical announcements of fascism which were heralded by Nietzsche's "Death of God" philosophy. The historical consequence of this philosophy was the rise of fascism which brought about death of man.

Shogo's power, like that of Georgina's derives from injustice which does not fulfil his own personal fundamental human instinct which Bond describes as the need for protection of life that is deeply rooted in human identity. His attempt to assert this human need is shown when he spares the life of the emperor's child after killing his father and taking over the city. This apparent human act contradicts with Shogo's actual unjust authority; he, therefore, falls victim, like Georgina, to the sense of guilt which he fosters in his people and makes the very

32. **Ibid.**, p. 30.
33. E. Bond, **Lear, ed. cit.**, p. vi.

foundation of his law and order. So, Shogo's act of saving the child, just as Georgina's care for the five children, exposes the contradiction between man's basic humanity and social morality, and makes him victim as much as victimizer. Whereas Georgina goes mad, Shogo is captured by imperialist forces after the failure of his counter-coup and is executed. However, Shogo should not be seen as a martyr and his words should not be understood as those of someone who repents his actual crimes and tyranny he has exercised over people for so long. He rather tries to save his own skin when he realizes that power is slipping away from him.

Basho's opportunist aspirations reveal the Eastern religious morality (Buddhism) which coincides with the Western religious morality (Christianity). Basho's words: "We need symbols to protect us from ourselves,"(34) is a reiteration of Georgina's morality: "We need the devil to protect people from themselves."(35) This proves that religious morality, whether Eastern or Western, pagan or secular, is basically the same. Both are based on guilt (Georgina's devil), and idolatry (Basho's symbols), which produce alienation. Bond explains the consequence of this morality on society and the individual:

> In this struggle pleasure becomes guilt, and the mora-

34. E. Bond, op. cit., p. 27.
35. Ibid., p. 42.

> lizing, consorious, inhuman puritans are formed. Sometimes their aggression is hidden under strenuous gleefulness, but it is surprising how little glee is reflected in their opinions and beliefs, and how intolerant, destructive and angry these guardians of morality can be.(36)

Basho, the advocate of religious morality, also suffers from self-alienation because he "locates the centre of his being outside himself. By deciding that he must give priority to the religious virtues of ego-denial and desire-denial, Basho opts out of the material world and leaves a baby to die of exposure of starvation"(37) Yet, Basho accuses Shogo for being a fanatic because he breaks the holy relic. Basho would rather save and protect a sacred object than a human life. This dislocation of human identity by alienating it to a man-made object is a manifestation of religious alienation. Basho's alienation drives him to use another human life, that of the emperor's child, to realize his interests. He, therefore, invites violence by plotting for the overthrow of Shogo's regime with the help of the British. Having abandoned the baby at the beginning, who is probably none other than the fallen tyrant Shogo, Basho frentically participates in his execution. The mutilated body of Shogo is the externa-

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36. E. Bond, Lear, **ed. cit.,** p. ix.
37. Tony Coult, **The Plays of Edward Bond** (London, 1977), p. 38.

lization of the inherent cannibalism which is the logical consequence of religious alienation. Bond comments on the aggressiveness and violence of Basho by contrasting them with Shogo's: Shogo, for instance,i s very much a victim of what happens. I mean he is not the criminal. If there is a criminal in that play, it's Basho."(38)

Basho is determined from the very beginning as a criminal when he decides to leave the baby by the river and embarks upon his mission to get enlightenment in the north. Returning after thirty years, Basho still has not got enlightenment and he witnesses the atrocities of Shogo (prisoners put into sacks and chained and drowned in the river) without being appalled or even moved. He is only moved when Shogo smashes the holy relic. Now the episode of Basho and the baby in the introduction is actually the foundation of all the ensuing injustice, violence and inhumanity that overcome the city and all the people in the play.

Bond finds a relation between violence and alienation, and he attempts to explain violence by locating it in man's alienation. Admitting that man's violence and aggression are not a necessity but rather an ability which man uses either as an attack or defence mechanism, Bond tries to explain the aggressive-response through the problem of alienation :

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38. E. Bond, Interview with John Calder, **Gambit,** vol. 8, No. 31, 1977, p. 9.

> We respond aggresively when we are constantly deprived of our physical and emotional needs, or when we are threatened with this; and if we are constantly deprived and threatened in this way — as human beings now are — we live in a constant state of aggression. It does not matter how much a man doing a routine work in, say, a factory or office is paid: he will still be deprived in this sense. Because he is behaving in a way for which he is not designed, he is alienated from his natural self, and this will have physical and emotional consequences for him. He becomes nervous and tense and he begins to look for threats everywhere. This makes him belligerent and provocative; he becomes a threat to other people, and so his situation rapidly deteriorates.(39)

Bond's idea about aggression recognizes alienation as a basic human problem. However, he subordinates it to the problem of violence and aggression. In other words, Bond's criticism of contemporary society concentrates upon the idea that the present society is the culmination of a long historical process of suppression of man's biological needs, in the sense that Bond uses it, the protection of life or the fundamental instinct rooted in human identity. When he talks about the present condition of

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39. E. Bond, **Lear**, p. viii.

human nature he identifies it with a destructure drive in human beings which has not only social but above all psychological repurcussions, and it is with the psychological motivations and responses that Bond is mostly concerned. He attacks religion and social morality which he considers forms of aggression used against man because they suppress his natural identity and turn him through the alleged sin and sense of guilt into a distored, alienated creature. The religious, moral and social taboos have created and nurtured abnormal human beings and a destructive civilization or, in Freudian terms, a "neurotic civilization."

Through the two key concepts of violence and the sacred used in the comparison of the products of the Arab and the European cultures, we may come to the following conclusion : sofar, we have two contradictory cultures. The one, the Arab culture, is non-dialectical, while the other, the European, is dialectical and spiral.

Now, the question is :

How can the two cultures, relying upon the existing givens, namely the religious, the sacred and the secular elements, proceed towards a positive progress that could both preserve and transcend these elements ?

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ABSOLUTES AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB THOUGHT

Absolute, defined as an inherent tendency in the human mind toward wholeness, is the unifying of fragmentary knowledge into a system. And that is why man's approach to the absolute is probably the most important of his coordinated reactions. This approach depends not only on the individual's degree of culture, but also on the degree of enlightenment attained. This means that this approach should be reduced to cultural patterns. The patterns are determined according to selection, which is the prime necessity in cultural life. One culture hardly recognizes monetary values; another has made them fundamental in every field of development. In one society technology is unbelievably slighted even in those aspects of life which seem necessary to ensure survival; in another, technological achievements are complex and admirably fitted to the situation. One builds an enormous cultural superstructure upon death, one upon life, one upon after-life.

The case of death is particularly interesting, because it is in the limelight of contemporary civilization. In occidental culture a whole library of studies has emphasized this phenomenon, death, beginning from the death of God to the death of the family.(1)

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This concerns occidental culture. What about the Arab culture ? A story is told that while Napoleon was still in Cairo, the French, to impress the natives, launched a 'montgolfer', a large balloon filled with hot air which at the time was the last word in French civilizational achievement. The reaction of the Egyptians was very different from what the French had expected. It was expressed by an Arab chronicler in these terms : "The French fabricated a monster which rose up into the sky with the intention of reaching and insulting God. But it rose only a feeble height, then fell back, ridiculously impotent."(2) On another occasion, the same sentiment was expressed by an Egyptian to a European : "All that you still want for us is to suppress death,"(3) meaning that death is the only thing that really counts.

Death, thus conceived, means the annihilation of the future and the absolute rejection of innovation on the pretence of preserving the past to the extent of absolutizing it. This absolutization of the past is at the same time absolutization of death. Hence, death becomes **the** absolute which unifies all human experiences, thereby equating being and non-being.

From this point of view, we are going to envisage the impact of the concept of death on the cultural superstructure of contemporary Arab thought through the medium of literature on the ground that death as the absolute is the pivotal concept

in contemporary Arab literature round which all other secondary themes revolve. This assumption will be illustrated through models of literary texts and critical writings of some renown contemporary Arab thinkers. They are :

The Song of Death	by Tawfik Al-Hakim (Egypt)
Night Traveller	by Salah Abdel-Sabour (Egypt)
Permanence and Change	by Adonis (Lebanon)

The Song of Death(4) discloses the predominant cultural values within an Egyptian rural community, which derive from and revolve round death, through the deeply rooted tradition of blood revenge. This tradition stems from death and aims at it. The cycle of death, determined by the return match of blood revenge, is the absolute that governs people's life in the remote southern Egyptian village. The educated son, newly returning from the city where his mother had kept him away from the eyes of the revenge seekers until he grows old enough to avenge the blood of his murdered father, refuses to listen to his mother's agonizing pleas to commit the act. Having enjoyed the life of modernity and civility in the city, he wishes to bring all that to his backward and deprived village in order to transform it. However, he fails to convince his adamant mother, and when asking her about the origin of the death match, she answers him in these vague terms: "Knowledge about that lies with Him who knows the invisible."(5) The mother's attitude con-

forms to Levy-Bruhl's remarks about the notion of death in primitive communities where death "requires to be explained by other than natural causes."(6) Here one may add that this applies not only to natural death, but also to the act of inducing the death of others. For here the "agency of a mystic force," expressed in the mother's words to her son, is the "a **priori** reasoning upon which experience has no hold."(7) In other words, this "mystic force" has turned a social act, blood vengeance, and its consequence, death, into an absolute.

Consequently, death becoming an absolute is indistinguishable from life, and is even regarded as a substitute for life. Further on in the play, when the argument grows hot between the inciting mother and the abstaining son, the son tries hopelessly to drive home to his mother the whole notion of development by expressing his desire to transform people's life style in the village and to ensure a decent and secure life for the villagers. He says: "I come only to open people's eyes to life; I bring you life."(8) The mother's stubborn reply to this call is: "And this is what we have been waiting for patiently... Like the dead, waiting for you to come to bring back life."(9) Life, according to the mother, means avenging the blemished honour of the family through the act of murder. In this sense, life is actually the perpetuation of death. The logic behind this death-in-life cycle is being-for-death, for life on earth is nothing but the extension of death, and death is the extension of life on

earth in the after-life. Therefore, the son who rebels against the absolute of death, is sentenced to death by his own mother whose sole motive and consolation in life is to implement the dictates of the absolute and to preserve the traditions. In this way, death triumphs over life and traditionalism over change.

The belief in the interchangeability of life and death, expressed in the mother's words, is the inherited legacy of the Pharaonic civilization founded on the belief in the return of the soul and its eternity in the next world. In this sense, death controls and directs life. Consequently, the preservation of that tradition means that the concept of death is still prevailing and preventing the Egyptians from being positive towards transforming reality, which is the real meaning of development.

A qualitatively different notion of death is conveyed in **Night Traveller.**(10) Here the author, proceeding from the Nietzschian category of "Death of God," skeptically views its impact upon modern man's behaviour and relations. While accepting Nietzsche's philosophy as a **fait accompli,** Abdel-Sabour provides his own interpretation, which is a critical modification of Nietzsche's own concept. The author re-examines Nietzsche's philosophy through the oppressor-oppressed relationship, and within the framework of his own historical perspective, proceeding from the assumption that history is repetitive and exemplary. Through history's circular motion, the author main-

tains that the past is perpetuated in the future. And this perpetuation in the play by the Conductor or the "Ten-Coat Man", who is the god-like dictator, while the Passenger, who is Everyman, represents the oppressed masses. The relation between both reveals an oppressor/oppressed dichotomy which is the outcome of man's loss of identity and his assumption of the identity of God. Accusing the Passenger of having killed God and stolen His identity, the Conductor explains to the victim :

> Now when I say "You have killed God I do not mean, of course,
> That (may God forgive me) you have...
> Certainly not. What I mean, rather, is that you have stolen
> His identity card — Which amounts to the same thing.(11)

However, the Conductor refuses to discuss the victim's plea that he never did anything of the sort, and continues his exposition about how "God has forsaken this part of the universe" and the need for correcting this situation by killing he who has killed God and restoring His stolen identity card, which turns out to be a blank card at the end of the play. Finally, retaliation is accomplished when the Passenger is cruelly stabbed to death by the Conductor.

Night Traveller, which the author calls "a black comedy", abounds with morbid cynicism which amounts to nihilistic despair, and revolves round the iea that man's rise into tyranny necessitates the deification and absolutization of man. In this case, the individual tyrant (the Conductor-dictator) who is Man absolutized, by replacing the "Absolute", kills God and assumes His identity. By so doing, man actually kills himself by alienating his humanity and transforming it into an absolute. This in turn results in the destruction of the humanity of man. That is because the arrogant tyrant, in his deified status, has done nothing but wage endless wars of destruction throughout history. Hence, the author maintains that the rise of fascism in all phases of history, including the present one, is determined by the assumption of the role of God by man. In other words, the logical conclusion of death of God, according to Abdel-Sabour, is death of Man.

The play demonstrates how, in his attempt to be god-like, the tyrant-individual has robbed the masses of their identity as subjects of history and agents of revolutionary change, and has reduced them to mere guilty objects entangled in the web of an illusory crime, killing God and stealing His identity (which is originally committed by the tyrant), and continually pursuing the illusion of acquitting themselves of the charge instead of being involved in liberating themselves from tyranny. In this sense, the masses are doomed to be eternally trapped in the illusion

since, within totalitarian systems, the prosecutor and the judge are always one and the same person.

The author's exposition of the theme of "death of God" discloses a qualitative difference between his own interpretation and Nietzsche's philosophy. Whereas Nietzsche proceeds from the "evolution" of man as his frame of reference, Abdel-Sabour adopts a historical perspective based upon "involution" and relates this perspective to political power through the ruler/masses dichotomy. The frame of reference of this historical perspective is the author's native culture, namely, the Pharaonic tradition, according to which the king was the worshipped god and the political system reflected the ruler-masses relation as an ontological "human condition" and a concomitant of man's existence. The logical outcome of this uneliminable phenomenon is total absence of genuine social change and clear denial of the possibility of real development which can only be achieved by the active participation of the masses. By this absolutization of the ruler, the author denies the efficacy of the masses. He thus negates any future vision of change. In this way he falls prey to the traditional cultural values which he supposedly rejects. This in turn reveals a discrepancy, namely, the unbridged gap between the writer's hope of change and his a priori (Pharaonic) convictions. And this descrepancy proves that the argument disclosed in the play is more forceful than the author's own hopes.

The foregoing literary models, despite their diversity, unfold a certain unity of vision which stagnates the past and absolutizes death, and consequently negates any future vision which is a necessity of the would-be change. The Labenese thinker Adonis strikingly emphasizes this negation of change in the following illuminating paragraph :

> Change has never been admitted into the Arab social structure to develop and transform society. On the contrary, change was regarded by the prevailing sectors as a kind of dissent and was given the derogatory name 'invention' to denote heresy. Moreover, inventors were called heretics, and the prominent ones among them were fought against either by being discredited and coersed, or by imprisonment and murder. Finally, any creative trend was suppressed. This was the beginning of the end of the dialectical glow within the Arab society and the predominance of traditionalism.(12)

This organic unity between the stagnation of the past and the negation of creativity within the Arab culture, leads one to analyse the approach of the Arabs towards technology. It is well observed that the Arabs are not engaged in technological production. This means that the **making** of machines, as distinct from their **use,** remains alien. This concept of the annihilation

of the making is the outcome of the negation of change and innovation on the pretence of preserving the authentic identity which lies in the past. This again is described by Adonis :

> ...the Arab culure pivots round the past. This might reveal to us the contradiction inherent in the Arab's position **vis-à-vis** Western modernity : he accepts the modern civilizational achievements, but rejects the rational principle which invented these achievements. Real modernity, however, lies in the act of creativity and not in the products in themselves. The Arab, thus, rejects real modernity which is rejection of doubt, experimentation, unconditioned freedom of research, and the adventurous spirit of discovering the unknown and accepting it.(13)

The repurcussions of this situation on the process of development in the Arab world have been gravely tremendous The lack of a scientific future vision, and its substitution by an archaic vision which stems from the past, resulted in the absence of creativity which is the true meaning of development in the sense of man's ability to change and control the environment. Affiliated with the absence of creativity is a state of pseudo-development, which is the outcome of an optical illusion of a so-called future view which is in fact a perpetuation of the past into the future. The only remedy for this state of

stagnation is the relativization of the absolute either by being de-secularized, that is, being out of the secular, or by being interiorized. This has been achieved in the West through the movement of religious reformation which led to the de-secularization of the religious absolute that was prevailing all over the secular areas, and through enlightenment which was the springboard of modernization and industrialization. The total absence of such movements in the Arab world has impeded the rise of modernization and industrialization and has rendered the Arabs consumers of Western technology and totally dependent upon it for survival in the contemporary world.

The question that arises now is: Having excluded themselves from the process of development within the present civilization, where do the Arabs stand in the forthcoming civilization which is about to emerge?

Alvin Toffler, in his recent book **The Third Wave,** emphasizes the death of the present civilization and assumes that a new civilization is emerging in our lives. This new civilization "brings with it new family styles, changed ways of working, loving and living."(14) This "new civilization", or The Third Wave as described by Toffler, has different connotataions. According to Z. Brezezinski it is a "technechronic civilization"; Daneil Bell calls it "post-industrial soicety"; in the terms of Soviet Futurists it is a "scientific-technological society." In

my own opinion, these different connotations of the new civilization stem from one common denominator, namely, the relative and not the absolute. Hence, true development presupposes the relativisation of the absolute as a precondition, which is obviously missing in the Arab world. This can only be achieved when Man, that relative finite being, is considered as an end and as the measure of all things.

Within the context of our Afro-Asian conference, the most adequate conclusion would be the following quotation from the African leader Nyerere : "The ultimate success of development depends not upon the absolute but upon the relative, that is, the masses."(15)

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2. Quoted in Raphael Patai, **The Arab Mind** (New York, 1973), p. 270.

3. **Ibid.**

4. Tawfik Al-Hakim, **Fate of a Cockroach and other plays** (transl.) Denys Johson-Davies (London, 1973).

7. **Ibid.,** p. 38.

8. Tawfik Al-Hakim, **op. cit.,** p. 87.

9. **Ibid.**

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11. **Ibid.,** p. 48.

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13. **Ibid.,** p. 31.

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15. J.K. Nyerere, **Nyerere On Socialism** (London, 1969), p. 58.



"NEW JERUSALEM": THE ROAD TO TOLERANCE

New Jerusalem(1) is a novel written by Farah Antun (1874-1922), the Arab novelist, dramatist and essayist of Lebanese origin, and published in 1904, one year after the publication of his book **The Philosophy of Ibn Rushd** which, in my opinion, is to be considered as a prelude to the understanding of the novel.

In **The Philosophy of Ibn Rushd,** Antun strongly advocates secularization through the separation of state and religion, as being the major indication of civility, by adopting the philosophy of Averroes. Antun dedicates his book to "the new shoots of the east" in Islam, Christianity and other religions, by whom he means :

> Those men of sense in every community and every religion of the east who have seen the danger of mingling the world with religion in an age like ours, and have come to demand that their religion be

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1. Farah Antun, **New Jerusalem** (Orshaleem al-Jadida) (Alexandria, 1904).

> placed on one side in a sacred and honoured place, so that they will be able really to unite, and to flow with the tide of the new European civilization, in order to be able to compete with those who belong to it, for otherwise it will sweep them all away and make them the subjects of others.(2)

The controversy following the publication of Antun's book with Muhammad 'Abduh was exchanged on the pages of 'Abduh's periodical "al-Ustaz" and Antun's "al-Jami'a", ultimately led to the separation of the two men, and was, the end of their long friendship, an incident which in itself is a symbol of religious intolerance.

This brings us to the philosophical and literary analysis of Antun's idea of tolerance. In one of his articles written in reply to 'Abduh's attacks, Antun defines tolerance :

> We cannot define 'tolerance' etymologically because the word has only recently been introduced into the modern language. Instead, we can define the meaning of 'tolerance' according to philosophical terminology. Tolerance, thus, means that man should not be condemned by man because religion is a personal

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2. Farah Antun, **The Philosophy of Ibn Rushd** (Alexandria, 1903), p. 23.

> relationship between man and God. Consequently, the religious authority is incapable of practising tolerance because its aims are diametrically opposed to those of tolerance. For the religious authority believes it alone possesses the truth, and that its rules and teachings are eternal truth. Therefore, the ruler in possession of religious authority must resort to two ways: the first is to put pressure on the people, who are not of his own religion, to force them to convert. The pressure can take various forms, such as persecution, terrorism and coercion, which were all practised in Europe during the dark ages. The other way for the religious ruler is to degrade and despise all those who do not belong to his religion. Consequently, there emerges within the nation some sectors who are distinguished and others who are despised. In this way the human right is lost and the virtue of tolerance no longer prevails.(3)

The basis of tolerance, according to Antun, is secularization in the sense of the separation of the temporal and spiritual authorities. On this basis Antun sought the establishment of a secular state in which Muslims and Christians can participate on complete equal footing. This rests on the premise that all religions

3. **Ibid.**, p. 102.

are essentially the same because they rest on a body of principles according to which human nature, human rights and duties are fundamentally the same.

Antun considers secularization, in the sense of separation of civil and religious authorities, as the sole means for the realization of tolerance in all religions. It is also the basis of contemporary civility. There are five reasons why this is necessary according to Antun. Firstly, and most important of all, is the liberation of human reason from any restrictive authority for the benefit of human civilization. Secondly, absolute equality between "sons of the same nation" irrespective of their beliefs or ideologies. Thirdly, the religious authorities have no right to interfere with the purposes of government because the religious legislate with a view to the next world and not to this world, which is the purpose of government legislations. Fourthly, states controlled by religion are weak : religious authorities are weak by their nature since they are at the mercy of the feelings of the masses and are a cause of weakness in society for they emphasize what divides men. To mix religion with politics even weakens religion itself because it is brought down into the arena and exposed to all the dangers and intrigues of political life. Finally, religious unity is impossible because although true religion is one, the different religious interests are always hostile to each other, and that is why religious government leads to war.

That is why Antun advocates national identity instead of religious identity in a state where the secular power is autonomous of control. He also suggests that this can only be realized through science and philosophy, which are the only means to drive out religious fanaticism.

The question now is :

What is the link between tolerance, thus defined, and **New Jerusalem ?**

New Jerusalem can be considered as the literary translation of Antun's book **The Philosophy of Ibn Rushd** where the idea of tolerance constitutes the pivotal theme round which characters and events revolve. The events of the novel take place in the city of Jerusalem when it was invaded by the Arabs under the leadership of Caliphate Omar around the middle of the 7th century A.D. When the Arabs besieged Jerusalem they imposed on its people three options; either the adoption of Islamic religion, or the payment of the tribute, a head tax imposed on non-muslims under Muslim rule; or war. The people of Jerusalem, led by their bishop, refuse to give in to the Arabs and prefer war to surrendering to another religion. The siege of Jerusalem continues during which the Arabs negotiate a settlement with the bishop through the mediation of a Jew who serves his own interests namely to avenge himself of all Christians due

to his sheer hatred of Christianity. On the side of the bishop there is Illia, the protagonist who is in love with the Jew's daughter, and who preaches tolerance to both sides during the negotiations.

The historical events are manipuated by the author in order to serve two purposes: one, to clarify his idea of tolerance and, second, to illuminate a contemporary issue, that is, the author's own controversy with 'Abduh over the issue of secularization. Therefore, the main plot round which the events revolve is that of "New Jerusalem" which is introduced at the beginning of the novel by Michael the monk in his 'sermon on the Mountain' to Illia. "New Jerusalem" is described as the earthly paradise when secularization, equality, true humanity and, above all, religious tolerance, are realized. In his "Sermon on the Mountain" Michael the monk says:

> In my old age I have come to believe in something that has shattered all my hopes. I believe that, within our present-day society, we cannot make any reform by means of religion unless human civilization could be restored to its infancy. For the world has changed drastically, and we need now a new prophet for the new human civilization. My dear friend, religion could not reform social corruption... We ask for a just force that could extricate this religion from the powerful and give it to the weak... We look beyond

> silver and gold to the future and expect from science to change the unhappy humanity into a happy one. We believe, therefore, that reformation on earth is a scientific issue not a religious one. Therefore, "Old Jerusalem" must give way to the "New Jerusalem" because they are two poles that can only meet at the end of time.(4)

The religious allegory is quite obvious in the title of the chapter. "The Sermon on the Mountain". However, what Antun aims at is the inversion of the heavenly message of Christ as contained in his sermon on the mountain. That is, Antun's purpose is to secularize Christian love or, in other words, tolerance, and to bring it down to earth to realize heavenly paradise here and not there. Secularization of Christ's teachings, by separating the mundance actuality, with its social ind political corruption, from celestial divine love with its purity and abstract values, is a call for the materialization of Christian idealism. The Christian idealistic values of love can only be humanized, that is, be in man's service, by being practised in everyday life and being made to eliminate wordly corruption and realizing equality and prosperity on earth, in the here and now.

This brings us to Antun's idea of socialism. Once more in **The Philosophy of Ibn Rushd,** Antun writes: "Socialism, or 'the

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4. F. Antum, **New Jerusalem,** p. 45.

religion of humanity', is taking place of the revealed faiths."(5) Although Antun refers to socialism as a 'religion', he advocates seculaziation as a necessary precondition for the realization of that socialism. From this viewpoint, he uses the word 'religion' in the sense of the basic human principles that underlie any religion whether revealed or otherwise. Such principles proceed from a love of humanity and equality of rights between men in matters of religious faith. In the novel Antun's idea of socialism is propagated in the form of an ideal community where absolute equality of the rights of men to coexist peacefully irrespective of race or religion, to work collectively in a spirit of tolerance and, above all, religious tolerance prevail.

Antun's utopian view of socialism implies a basic prelude to scientific socialism, namely, enlightenment. This is stated by Engels in **Socialism : Utopian and Scientific :**

> Modern socialism in its theoretical form originally appears as a more developed and allegedly more consistent extension of the principles laid down by the great French philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century... We saw how the French philosophers of the eighteenth century, the forerunners of the Revolution, appelaed to reason as the

5. **Ibid.,** p. 165.

sole judge of everything in existence. A rational state, a rational society, were to be founded.(6)

The question is :

How far does Engels' idea about the need for the philosophy of Enlightenment agree with Antun's idea of secularization ?

Engels' idea of sicentific socalism proceeds from the concept of secularization as that irrevocable process in European civilization by which human existence came to be determined by the dimension of time and history. A secular age then is one whose basic interest is with concerns of factual issues of life without any need to refer to any supernatural.

Although Antun's idealistic socialism transcends the supernatural and calls for a concrete remedy for social inequality and exploitation, it advocates love and humanity. Antun turns an essentially dynamic and concrete problem, namely, social change, into a static and abstract issue through the use of such utopian concepts.

Furthermore, Antun's idealism limits tolerance to the domain of religious faith, while totally ignoring politics. The main

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6. F. Engels, **Socialism : Utopian and Scientific** (Peking : Foreign Language Press, 1975), p. 45.

issue for him is that all religions should accept and recognize one another. All he asks for is to set religion aside or to consider it as a private matter. In the novel the rules of religious tolerance as applied in "New Jerusalem" are explained by Michael the monk :

> We do not investigate or argue about the principles of religion nor about any of its branches... We, therefore, absolutely respect all principles and recognize them... For goodness and true, pure worship can be accomplished by any means which are all good so long as the heart is pure and faithful.(7)

Hence, Antun completely ignores the fact that religion is part of a society's superstructure which imposes itself upon the political and social consciousness of the masses and is strongly dependent upon society's economy and politics and, as such, cannot be considered as an indepedent entity.

What is the reason behind Antun's idealistic view of tolerance ?

The answer is : his misunderstanding of secularization by equating it with secularism. Antun understands secularization simply as the separation of the spiritual and temporal authorities,

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7. **Ibid.**, p. 58.

while the word actually means a life style that embraces all areas of society and permeates the outer and inner life of the individual. While Antun refuses to consider secularization as a life style, he, at the same time, identifies it with secularism which is a more advanced stage of secularization. Due to this paradox Antun limits tolerance to the religious sphere and excludes politics. He thus unconsciously invites intolerance because by eliminating the potilical aspect of tolerance, or by emptying it of its political content, consciousness of the roots of intolerance are blurred and ultimately disappear. The inevitable outcome of the absence of such consciousness is intolerance. Thus, religious tolerance can breed its opposite because it makes religious conflict its frame of reference through the confrontation of two or more religious dogmas. The only way to avoid this intolerance is to relativize the religious dogmas, and this can be achieved by involving politics in the concept of tolerance.

Antun's misunderstanding of secularization is due to another more fundamental misunderstanding of another concept, namely, socialism. While advocating socialism, Antun invariably uses the word "reform" to denote the kind of change he is seeking as a remedy for social and political corruption. However, the difference between the two notions "socialism" and "reformism" is a qualitative one. Reformism is the expression of the nineteenth-century European liberalism whereby social change was

regarded as an evolutionary process that took place within the framework of the status quo. This was done under the liberal slogan of liberation of reason. Whereas socialism is a radical change of the entire social structure resulting from the political commitment of the liberated reason to social revolution. While reformism adopts secularization as a style of life, socialism, and especially scientific socialism, is not satisfied with secularization but with secularism which may be regarded as a final extreme of secularization and can be defined as a belief system in which man alone is regarded as the maker and measure of his existence.

Now, if Antun's view of tolerance is idealistic, how can it be inverted ? That is, how can it be materialized ?

In my own view, the answer is by assimilating the evolution of the state from religious to secular. This process illustrates the close relationship between religion and politics and provides the proof that the evolution of religion corresponds to the evolution of the state. The practical steps towards the realization of this evolution are secularization and enlightenment, which is the inevitable outcome of secularization. Secularization is realized through religious reformation as a prelude culminating in the Enlightenment which means sovereignty of reason. The outcome of these two stages is relativization of the absolute.

The question now is :

What have been the repurcussions of Antun's idealistic view of tolerance ?

The exclusion of politics from tolerance bred the opposite, namely, intolerance. This is confirmed by the evolution of a historical phenomenon within the Arab world stemming from the rejection of separating religion and state, that is, rejection of tolerance in the sense advocated by Antun. This trend which is oriented towards the total rejection, to the point of annihilation, of Western civilization on the grounds of religious fanatism manifested itself on the occasion of the controversy between Antun and 'Abduh as a result of which 'Abduh declared that tbe separation of religion and state was not only undesirable, it was impossible, for the ruler must belong to a specific religion which must inevitably have its influence on his acts. In this way historical reality provided a strong evidence of the triumph of intolerance over tolerance.

IDENTITY CRISIS IN EGYPTIAN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY

This paper is concerned with two issues, one theoretical and the other a case study. The theoretical issue is divided into two: identity and crisis.

Identity, according to modern philosophy, is a term meaning that an object is the same with itself. "Cogito ergo sum," this Cartesian statement was questionable on the ground that how at each moment of thought can I vouch for the assertion that the "I" who thinks now is the "I" who was thinking. Without that assertion we have mere stream of consciousness, not identity or sameness. The clarification came from Locke through the amalgamation of consciousness with thinking:

> The identity of the same Man consists... in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body. Consciousness always accompanies thinking... in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the Sameness of a rational Being.(1)

Paper presented to the International Symposium on "Africa and the Problem of its Identity", Düsseldorf, 7-9 July, 1982.

A crisis, by definition, is problematic. And what is problematic is contradictory. As for identity, it involves a transformative stage of personality development, individual and collective, which may be considered a qualitative shift. That means the supersession (Aufhebung) of the contradiction to a higher level. Hence, the crisis of identity signifies a contradiction that has to be superseded for the sake of realizing the qualitative transformation in the critical period of personality development.

The identity crisis tackled in this paper is not absolute, but located within a particular time span covering the early decades of this century. This period witnessed two major events: a tremendously rich intellectual up-surge, and the rise of the Egyptian novel as a literary genre.

The question, then, is:
Where does the contradiction lie?

The contradiction lies between a desired communication between the Arab world and the Western world on one hand, and an actual separation on the other.

A d i b (A Man of Letters) by Taha Hussein is examined as a model exemplifying this contradiction which is the underlying feature of the identity crisis.

Taha Hussein (1889-1973), surnamed "chief of Arabic li-

terature," was the leader of the modernists in the 1920s and 1930s, a pioneer of his contemporary writers and a father figure and literary patron of his subsequent generations. His contribution to Arabic literature cannot be measured in terms of his own works, but his real merit lies in the fact that he typifies the new liberal spirit in Arab thought that emerged in the first decades of this century. He made radical innovations in the Arabic style which surpassed the rigidity and elaborateness of Classical Arabic prose. His real contribution to Arabic thought, however, besides his translation of Greek and French classical works into Arabic, is his attempt to apply Western canons of criticism to Classical Arabic lirterature(3). It was in the midtwenties that he made the big explosion within Arabic literary circles by publishing his book *Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926), which was reprinted in the following year with modification and an additional chapter on prose literature, under the new title *Pre-Islamic Literature*. In this book, through the application of the Cartesian method, Hussein proposed and attempted to prove that the great bulk of pre-Islamic literature as it is known is largely later forgeries. The book resulted in an accute clash with the old-fashioned Azharites who regarded it as an implicit attack on religious traditions, since it cast doubt on the accepted view of the environment in which the Prophet Mohammed received his revelation. The book was thus considered tantamount to heresy and was, consequently, banned.

This early attempt was later revived in Hussein's major works of fiction(4), written in the personal style which is almost documentary and autobiographical. These works, being written in a more indirect and implicit medium of expression, can be regarded as the alternative for the abortive experience. The pivotal idea in these works is the East-West cultural confrontation or the contradiction between a desired unity of the two worlds into one and an actual separation which preserves the gap between the two antithetical worlds.

This idea is most strongly and accurately embodied in A d i b, subtitled "a Western Adventure." The novel is written in the form of letters addressed to the author by an unidentified friend, who is the protagonist, and intermingled with the author's own comments and meditations on the events, ideas and situations implied in the letters. The main events of the novel take place between the years 1910 and 1917, yet the work was first published in book form only in 1935. The narrative is a flashback, or the present considered through a rear-view mirror of the past, which exhibits the dialectical relation between past and present through the mediation of the letters.

The protagonist is an Egyptian middle-class intellectual who lives at the critical period of civilizational transformation at the turn of the twentieth century, and whose only dream is to go to Paris on a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne. In Paris,

however, although he excells in his studies, he suffers from a deep and an accute cultural shock. As a result he indulges in the pleasures of modern European life to the extent of insanity and ultimate death. The character of the protagonist, although he is a real personality, is a stereotype which recurs in many works of contemporary Arabic literature (5). He is a variation on the character of the Egyptian intellectual who suffers the negative consequences of cultural confrontation with Western civilization. This character represents a typical case of alienation: he is an extremely sensitive poet who perceives the world through the poetic faculties by transforming his life-experiences into poetic-experience, that is, by transforming them into words, metaphors and images.

He thus feels alienated from his own environment where he grew in an Egyptian rural community. He is rejected by his own people who scorn his poetic tendencies and are repulsed by his ugliness of face. In France, although he feels at a moment that he has nearly realised his ambition, he is ultimately rejected by the French society which cannot absorbe him. He thus feels total alienation from his homeland, and alienation from the new society where he has transplanted himself after having uprooted himself from his original culture. He can neither assimilate the new culture to which he does not belong, nor can he totally give up his root-culture. His crisis is one of identity which involves the inability to resolve the problem of

traditional heritage and modern practices. He feels eternally pulled between two worlds and cannot have a firm sense of identity necessary for building a new personality.

In one of his turbulent arguments with his friend concerning his decision to divorce his wife before leaving for Paris and his determination to have full freedom to indulge in the pleasures of Parisian life, the author, in a tremendous outrage, strongly condemns his friend's attitude and accuses him of blasphemy and heresy. However, after regaining self-control he ponders on the experience saying:

> When I gradually came back to my self I felt my turban on my head and my 'jubbah' and 'caftan' on my body, and I remembered that I am a sheikh and an Azharite, that I have spoken to my friend in the language of a man of religion, that my friend was making fun of me and putting me back in my right place after I had disappointed him. I discovered that my study at the university under the European professors, my talk with my friend, my readings of European books, my attempts at innovation and my rebellion against al-Azhar and Azharites and their charges of heresy, all this was nothing but a delicate veil that could not withstand the first trial. I am just a typical Azharite who has swallowed the books of

religion and inherited the legacy of the past and preserved it in his heart throughout thirteen centuries... I felt all this because my friend discovered that I was still an Azharite in spirit, heart and mind, who considered indulgence in the European life a sin.(6)

This shocking self-critical realization is the result of the author's understanding and assessment of the East-West experience. The logical conclusion of this realization is exemplified in the protagonist's tragic end as a result of an accute case of schizophrenia.

Francis Macnab observes, after a life-long experience with schizophrenic patients, that the person who becomes schizophrenic is involved in an accumulating loss of confirmation of his being-in-the-world and, as a result, his divided self assumes the centre of existence by the schizophrenic's attempt to withdraw into himself under the persuasion that his identity can only be found by and in and through his self. On the verge of total insanity, due to an intense and uncontrollable sense of persecution as a result of withdrawal into the self, the protagonist writes to his friend explaining the reason of his own disease :

> I have a feeling that my upbringing in Egypt has led me to all that. For my upbringing was neither or-

> ganized nor controlled by any clear or consistent origins. My life was extremely confused, driving me to the right and to the left and leading me, sometimes, to stagnation. Had I stayed in Egypt, I would have spent my entire life in utter confusion. But I crossed the sea to an environment where confusion is out of place and where such weak and confused souls as ours cannot possibly survive. Therefore, I could not tolerate the burdens, nor could I yield to its dictates of order. The war added to my confusion and my self lost its centre so to speak, and I became the toy of and subject to my whims.(8)

This accurate literary account conforms to the scientific diagnostic discription of schizophrenia. The protagonist's dislocated or alienated identity — expressed in the phrase "my self lost its centre" — is the key to the understanding of the identity crisis, being the pivotal theme of the novel. In other words, the schizophrenic mind which Hussein registeres so accurately through the character of his friend, whose name he deliberately conceales, can be assessed and interpreted by adopting the principle of interpreting the lower through the higher. The lower in that case is the schizophrenic character as represented in Adib, and the higher is contained in Hussein's later preoccupation with propagating the philosophy of Descartes and the Cartesian method in the field of Arabic culture and is fully expressed in his book Pre-Islamic Poetry:

> I intend to introduce in literature the philosophic method propagated by Descartes at the beginning of this modern age, to investigate the truth of things. It is well known to everyone that the basic rule of this method requires that the researcher should give up all formerly received knowledge and embark upon the subject of his research with a free mind. Let us adopt this method when we tackle our Classical Arabic literature and its history. Literature is in need of freedom... It should not be regarded as a religious discipline or a religious means and should be liberated from sacredness... Literature should be like all other sciences subject to research and criticism, analysis, doubt, rejection and denial.... The Arabic language should be freed from sacredness and become subject to the work of researchers as substance is to the experiments of scientists.(9)

Further on he writes:

> If there is in Egypt today a group of people who support the old and others who are in favour of the new, this is because some of these people have been influenced by the European style whereas others have only assimilated a small portion of that influence or none at all. The increasing dissemina-

tion of Western science in Egypt and the tendency of individual and social efforts towards spreading Western science will eventually make our minds become European which will make us study the Arabic literature and history in the light of Cartesian method as the West did with the Greek and Roman literatures... The future is for Descartes's method and not for the method of the ancients.(10)

Yet, after the famous clash with al-Azhar religious authorities and the alleged charges of heresy directed against Hussein due to the publication of the book, the author was forced to ommit the major ideas and modify some others in order to tone down the general critical fervour of the book. The ultimate consequence was that the author eventually withdrew his ideas. However, this experience has left its deep traces on Hussein, and this was the strong motive behind his attempt to revive it in his works of fiction, particularly in A d i b. The novel, in fact, is a projection of the author's own dilemma through the alter-ego, i.e. the protagonist, who represents the extreme liberal tendencies both in thought and behaviour.

Having discarded the call for critical thinking through the application of Cartesian method, Hussein had to suffer the repurcussions of his early abortive attempt and his submission to the forces of traditionalism. This was around 1935, the year

he published A d i b. In this sense A d i b can be regarded as an apology for having discarded Western thought and succumbing to the dictates of Oriental traditionalism. In this sense also, the author admits of the preservation of the East/West dichotomy through the elimination of the Cartesian mind. Having done so, what remains is the schizophrenic mind as an expression of the Arab mind.

By rejecting the Western critical mind and preserving the Arab dogmatic mind, the author discards relativity which is the spirit of contemporary civilization and conserves the absolute, preserving thus the identity crisis unsolved. This insoluble dichotomy is strikingly dscribed in the novel by the friend :

> You expect me to write you about my life in Paris. And so, indeed, I would have liked to do. But life in Paris cannot be described in books or letters, and you cannot possibly know what that life is except by living it. Yet I could express my feelings in Paris in a somewhat inaccurate manner... Go to the pyramids... and penetrate into the depths of the big pyramid. You will not tolerate life in there, and you will feel a chocking sensation, and perspiration will cover your body, and you will be overcome by the feeling that you are carrying the weight of that big structure which is about to destroy you. Then go out

of the pyramids and breathe the light, fresh air. Then learn that life in Egypt is like living inside the pyramids and living in Paris is that life after emerging from these depths.(11)

However, the author's persistence to solve the East/West dichotomy recurred in 1938 with the publication of *The Future of Culture in Egypt*. The pivotal idea in this book is the author's conviction that independent Egypt must become part of Europe for that is the only way to become part of modern world. He writes:

> Believe me, dear reader, our real national duty, once we have obtained our independence and established democracy in Egypt, is to spend all we have and more, in the way of strength and effort, of time and money, to make Egyptians feel, individually and collectively, that God created them for glory not ignominy, strength and not weakness sovereignty and not submission, renown and not obscurity, and to remove from their hearts the hideous and criminal illusion that they are created from some other clay than Europeans, formed in some other way, and endowed with an intelligence other than theirs.(12)

From this text it is obvious that Hussein is belittling the problem of religious difference and this is due to the Cartesian method which he had adopted in his book *Pre-Islamic*

Poetry. For him, the distinguishing mark of the modern world is that it has brought about a virtual separation of religion and civilization. It is therefore quite possible to take the bases of civilization from Europe without taking its religion. This involves one condition, which is that Egyptians too should be able to make the same separation. This separation is the solution of the identity crisis because it will realise the supersession of the contradiction inherent in the crisis and achieve the qualitative transformation necessary for the creation of the new identity within which the desired communication between East and West is actually realised.

The question is:

Is this possible ?

NOTES

1. John Locke. *Human Understanding*. Vol. II. Ch. XXVII. Prs. 6, 9.

2. John Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature* 1800-1970, London, 1971.

3. His first work in this line was *Hadith al-Arba'* (Wednesday Chats) on Ommayad and Abbassid poetry; *Ma'al-Mutanabi* (With Mutanabi). His ideas on education and literary criticism are expressed in *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi Misr* (The Future of Culture in Egypt).

4. These are *Du'a' al-Karawan* (The Call of the Curlew, 1934), *Adib* (1935), *al-Ayyam* (The Days, an autobiography in three parts), Part I appeared in 1927, Part II in 1939.

5. E.g. Tawfik al-Hakim's *Bird from the East* (Asfour minal Shark), Yehia Hakki's *Om Hashim's Lamp* (Qandil Om Hashim); Taiyeb Saleh' *Season of Migration to the North*.

6. Taha Hussein, *Adib*, Cairo, Dal al-Ma'arif, 1965.

7. Ibid.

8. Taha Hussein, *Pre-Islamic Poetry* (al-Shi'r al-Jahili), Cairo, 1926.

9. Ibid.

10. Adib.

11. *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, (trsl.) Albert Hourani, Oxford, 1961.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN DRAMA: THE CULTURAL CONTENT

Discourse analysis in drama, or analysis of dramatic discourse, raises one major question:

What is the criterion, or the frame of reference, of such an anlysis?

In my own opinion, the answer to this question has to be located in the history of drama, which registers a dialectical evolution from mythos to logos. In this sense, drama corresponds to and reflects the evolution of human civilization as the externalization of man's potential drive to understand, control and appropriate nature through two contradictory, yet complementary, activities of the human mind, namely, mythos and logos. The unifying element of these two contradictory activities is the principle of causality. In the case of mythos the logic of causality is irrational and non-scientific, and depends rather on intuition and magic. Logos, on the other hand, is represented by discursive logic, i.e. demonstrative argumentation based on premises and conclusions, where the relation between cause and effect is a rational one. In both cases the purpose is one; they

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Comment read at 2nd National Symposium on "Discourse Analysis", organized by CDELT, Ain Shams University, held at Cairo University (March, 1982).

only differ in method. That is why anthropologists like Levy Bruhl maintain that there is no qualitative difference between the primitive and the civilized mind, and that the difference is only on the level of method.

The history of drama registers this dialectical evolution from the mythical to the rational, or from mythical discourse to discursive, demonstrative, rational argumentation.

Tragedy began in ritual and myth. In his famous definition of tragedy, Aristotle determines the six parts that constitute the quality of tragedy by stating that the plot is the most important of all, the first principle and the scul of tragedy. Or, to borrow Aristotle's own philosophic term, plot, which in its Greek origin is "mythos", is the "prime mover" of drama.

With Roman tragedy, the rational, discursive elements are found, especially in the rhetorical tragedies of Seneca.

In medieval Christian drama the emphasis is again on the ritual and mythical content.

Renaissance drama, with the revival of Graeco-Roman culture, manifests an interest in the discursive side of drama, although the mythical element is not totally absent. e.g. the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy, and some of the

soliloquies in the great Shakespearian tragedies, which could be regarded as philosophical statements which add a rational dimension o the portraya of the tragedy.

Rostoration drama, with its heroic tragedies, marks a balance that is in favour of rhetoric and discursive exposition. The Age of Reason, and the principles of Enlightenment, are at best expressed in the German classical drama in the problem plays and the plays of ideas, and in the philosophical plays of Voltaire and Diderot.

Next we have the Romantic reaction, with its emphasis on emotions and mythical elements. e.g. Geothe's Faust can be regarded as a dramatic formulation of the myth, which contains some philosophic, discursive elements.

Late 19th and early 20th century British drama marks a switch back to discursive, demonstrative, logical drama of ideas; e.g. Bernard Shaw's plays.

On the other hand, there is the Irish revival, which is a return to ritual and mythical elements, e.g. the plays of Synge and Yeats.

Similarly, the religious verse drama of T.S. Eliot is an absolutization of the Christian myth and ritual.

Other examples are O'Neill's modern interpretations of ancient Greek myths, and Anouill's modern versions of the same myths.

Modern British drama since 1956 registers the same dialectics of mythos and logos. Attempts at de-mythologizing myths are accompanied by other parallel endavours to preserve the myth, e.g. Peter Shaffer's **Royal Hunt of the Sun,** Peter Barnes' **The Bewitched.**

On the other hand, the philosophical plays of Sartre and Camus which are dramatic expositions of the writers' own philosophic theories.

The political theatre of the 1960s is another example where drama becomes discursive, using the theatre as a forum or a panel of discussion, e.g. the didactic and epic plays of Brecht and the documentary plays of Peter Weiss in Germany. In England, the socio-political plays of Arden, Wesker, Edward Bond, Trevor Griffiths, David Hare, Howard Brenton, David Edgar.

This brief history of drama shows the dialectics of mythos and logos, or the alternating emphasis on mythical and discursive elements in drama. What remains to be found out are the objective socio-cultural conditions under which either of the

elements is allowed to gain priority over the other. This brief exposition also shows that the historical evolution of drama tends towards a gradual emphasis on drama as discourse which, if carried to its logical conclusion, may result in the ultimate negation of drama. Although there are attempts to revive the myth, existing side by side with the trend of de-mythologization, manifested by anti-intellectual movements, religious revivalism, revival of oral cultures, priority is still on the side of the rational elements in most cases.

This brings us to one major crucial question concerning the future of drama in a highly scientific and technologized world :

What will be the impact of the scientific and technological revolution on the future of drama ?

The answer to this question will lead to a whole series of questions :

Is the impact only technical, or does it cover the content as well ?

Will drama be gradually and ultimately totally purged of the mythical elements that had once constituted its very essence ?

And if this happens, will drama continue to exist, or will it assume a new essence ?

And if so, how far can we call this new essence dramatic ?

And finally :

How far is discourse analysis a threat to the essence of drama ?

DRAMA FROM "MYTHOS" TO LOGOS":
A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Comparative drama, or the analysis and interpretation of dramatic texts within a comparative perspective, raises a major question : what is the most appropriate approach to such study ?

In my own opinion, the fundamental approach to be adopted should combine two organically related aspects of drama, the historical and the cultural. This historico-cultural approach is appropriate for a global perspective on human civilization, which has evolved through man's drive to understand, control and appropriate nature according to two contradictory, yet complementary, activities of the human mind : mythos and logos. The unifying element in these two contradictory activities is the principle of causality. In the case of mythos the logic of causality is irrational and non-scientific, and depends rather on intuition and magic. Logos, on the other hand, is represented by discursive logic, i.e. demonstrative argumentation based on premises and conclusions, where the relation between cause and effect is rational.

The history of drama registers a dialectical evolution from

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mythos to logos. In this sense it corresponds to and reflects the evolution of human civilization. Tragedy began in ritual and myth. In his famous definition of tragedy, Aristotle orders the six parts that constitute tragedy by remarking that plot is the most important of all, the first principle and soul of tragedy. To borrow Aristotle's own terms, plot, which in Greek is "mythos", it the "prime mover" of drama. With Roman tragedy, rational, discursive elements appear, especially in the rhetorical tragedies of Seneca. In medieval Christian drama, the emphasis is again on the ritual and mythic content. Renaissance drama, with the revival of Graeco-Roman culture, manifests an interest in the discursive side of drama, although the mythical element is not totally absent. For instance, the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy, and some of the soliloquies in the great Shakespearean tragedies, which may be read as philosophical statements that augment the rational dimension of tragedy. Shakespeare's attempts to secularize drama by empasizing man's free will against the power of Providence, were more fully realized in Marlowe's Godlike figure of Faustus, who conquers the universe by the power of reason. In a sense, **Dr. Faustus** can be considered to have de-mythologized drama by an application of Hermeneutics, the newly-born art of interpreting authoritative texts, especially sacred scripture, by exploring the secular origin of the Latin language.

These attempts re[illegible]t the spirit of the Renaissance, namely

the emancipation of man from the dogmatism of the church and the emergence of modern experimental science. However, the Renaissance did not liberate man from every kind of superstition. The Eslightenment reaffirmed man's independent intellectual activity, that is, the sovereignty of reason. The issue in the eighteenth century was the demythologization of drama; rationalizing mythology was part of a movement that called for sovereignty of reason in all fields of knowledge. The Age of Reason, and the principles of the Enlightenment, are best expressed in the German classical drama, in problem plays and the plays of ideas, and in the philosophical plays of Voltaire and Diderot. The Romantic reaction, with its emphasis on emotions and mythical elements, e.g. Goethe's *Faust*, can be regarded as a dramatic reformulation of myth which contains some philosophical and discursive elements. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century drama marks a reversion to the discursive, demonstrative, logical drama of ideas (e.g. Shaw's plays). On the other hand, the Irish revival returns to ritual and mythical elements, as in the plays of Synge and Yeats. Similarly, the religious verse drama of T.S. Eliot is an absolutization of Christian myth and ritual by incarnating this Christian absolute in the form of drama.

Modern drama, with its two antithetical pillars, the Existentialist and the Marxist, is basically philosophical. The plays of Sartre and Camus are dramatic expositions of the writer's

philosophic theories. Brecht's Lehrstücke and Epic plays represent his dramatic formulation through the technique of Alienation-Effects — of the Marxist philosophic conception of the alienation of labour. The political theatre of the 1960s is another case where drama becomes discursive, using the theatre as a forum or a panel of discussion, as in the documentary plays of Peter Weiss in Germany, or the socio-political plays of Arden, Wesker, Bond, Griffiths, Hare, Brenton, and Edgar in England.

This brief history of drama reveals the dialectics of mythos and logos, or the alternating emphasis on the elements of mythos and logos in drama. What remains to be discovered are the objective socio-cultural conditions under which either of the elements gains priority over the other.

So far we have discussed European and American drama. Let us now consider drama in the Arab region, specifically, Egyptian drama.

The Egyptian theatre emerged as part of a wider socio-cultural movement, coinciding with the first cultural contact with Europe in the nineteenth century. Before that, drama, in the European sense, did not exist. It was rejected due to its Greek pagan origin and the fact that it is founded on anthropomorphism that is prohibited in Islam. Aristotle's use of the

concept of imitation was misinterpreted in most cases by Arab translators. During the Abbassid rule Matta Ibn Younis translated tragedy as eulogy, comedy as invective; for he adopted an Islamic frame of reference, rather than a Greek one. It is worth mentioning that the theatre, as a modern European art form, was introduced to Egypt by Christian Syrio-Lebanese immigrants, such as Maron Nakkash, Al-Kabbani, Farah Antoun, Iskandar Farah, and Yakoub Sannoue, the latter an Egyptian Jew.

The first contact with the West produced an acute cultural crisis based on a contradiction between a desired communication with he West and an actual separation. This contradiction (which has roots in the 18th century) produced the much-discussed problem of authenticity and modernization. The relation between authenticity and modernization implies a contradiction between the wish to modernize society in accordance with world trends of development, and an unwillingness to give up traditional values; it is a question of how to become modern without losing identity. Identity is seen in a past rather than a future context. Authenticity is a term often used in developing countries to distinguish national identity. As a reaction to imperialism, national liberation movements identify their policy of decolonization with that of de-westernization, the west having damaged traditional cultural roots especially religion without providing a satisfactory substitute.

This problematic dichotomy was reflected in Egyptian literature in the theme of identity, or the Egyptian personality, and was formulated in drama as a conflict between authenticity, or traditional sacred socio-cultural values, and modernity, or the cultural products of the secular West.

I shall illustrate this theme by three examples: Salah Abdel-Sabbour's **Night Traveller;** Youssif Idris' **Al-Farafir;** and Tawfik Al-Hakim's **Cavemen.**(1)

The author of **Night Traveller** takes as its premise the Nietzschean idea of the "death of God", and examines its impact upon the modern man. While accepting Nietzsche's philosophy as a given, Abdel-Sabbour provides his own interpreta-

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1. I have published studies on each of these plays; see "Absolutes and Development in Contemporary Arab Throught," **Proceedings of the Second Afro-Asian Philosophy Conference on Philosophy and Culture,** Kenya, Nairobi University Press, 1981; "Dialectics of Violence and the Sacred in Euro-Arab Literature," **Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of the Euro-Arab Social Research Group (EASRG) on Youth, Violence and Religion: Secularization and De-Secularization,** Cairo, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop Press, 1980; and "Cultural Identity as Defier of Time," **Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of the Euro-Arab Social Research Group (EASRG) on Cultural Identity and Time,** Cairo, Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop Press, 1983.

tion, which is a critical modification of Nietzsche's concept. He privileges the oppressor-oppressed relationship within his own historico-cultural background, invoking a mythical vision of history as repetitive and exemplary, an expression of an absolute truth or a transhuman revelation which took place in the holy time of the beginnings. Through history's circular motion, the author maintains that the past is perpetuated in the future. And this perpetuation of the past is objectified in the phenomenon of totalitarianism, represented in the play by the Conductor or the "Ten-Coat Man", who is a god-like dictator, while the Passenger, or Everyman, represents the oppressed masses. The relation between them is the outcome of man's loss of identity and his assumption of the identity of God. There is a qualitative difference between this conception and that of Nietzsche. Whereas Nietzsche proceeds from the "evolution" of man as his frame of reference, Abdel-Sabbour adopts a historical perspective based upon "involution", and exhibits this perspective through a political dichotomy between the ruler and masses. The context is the author's culture, that is, the Pharaonic tradition according to which the king was worshipped as god and the political system was predicated on the ruler-masses relation as an ontological "human condition". The logical outcome of this is a total absence of genuine social change and a denial of the possibility of real development, which can only be achieved by the active participation of the masses. By this absolutization of the ruler, the author withdraws efficacy from

the masses. He thus negates any vision of future change. In this way he falls prey to the traditional cultural values which he wishes to reject. This ambivalence is revealed in the unbridged gap between the writer's hope of change and his a priori Pharaonic presuppositions. And this ambivalence proves that the argument disclosed in the play is stronger than the autohr's own hopes.

The title of the second play, **Al-Farafir** (a coined pseudo-name for slaves) presents its pivotal concept, the master/slave relationship, or man's subjugation by man, as a manifestation of the violence incorporated in the act of enslavement. The author's vision of the origin of enslavement combines historical (secular) and mythical (religious) perspectives. The concept of the sacred absolutizes the master/slave relationship, picking up where Defoe's Robinson Cruoe left off, that is, the established state of enslavement. He accepts the relation of subjugation as a fact, and outdoes Defoe to the point of denying the possibility of its elimination. When the master and slave die at the end of the play and are reduced to atoms, the master becomes the proton and the slave the electron which keeps revolving unwillingly round the master. Idris sanctions violence by rendering sacred the state that gave rise to it. The sacred view of history equates the use of violence as a means of sustaining a specific social system with the original crime in the theological sense. Thus, the author turns a historical fact into a divine truth,

which the author defends against any change. He maintains that subjugation will persist in any kind of system, whether liberal capitalist or socialist (which according to Iris is state capitalism), because the master/slave relation is a supra-historical and extra-societal phenomenon, i.e., an ontological problem. The subjugation of man becomes natural phenomenon, or a taboo, elevated to the level of the sacred. Secular and religious are unified in the sacred.

The lost model. Tawfik Al-Hakim's **Cavemen**, attempts within the field of drama to resolve the crisis of cultural identity by reference to the Koranic parable of the cavemen. In his treatment of the parable, the author makes some modifications which serve a double religious/secular purpose, absolutizing ancient Egyptian civilization as the root of cultural identity. This modification may be considered a secularization of a sacred myth, demytholozing it by turning it into a dramatic piece of work. The religious parable becomes a fable, which is, according to Aristotle, the soul of tragedy. Al-Hakim rationalizes mythology by his dramatical treatment of the parable, and humanizes the sacred characters, but he ends up by aborting his own effort. He does so by absolutizing time, that is, replacing history by revelatory time, a fixing of the sacred past. Cultural identity here is represented by the cave, and the emergence from the cave results in an identity crisis. If the epistemological theme (compare Plato's cave allegory, or Bacon's image of the

den) shows an evolution from mythos to logos, the cultural identity dramatized by Al-Hakim represents a devolution from logos to mythos. The conflict between the "epistemological" and the "cultural" cave in the play is solved by the elimination of the epistemological dimension; historical time is rejected, and revelatory time is absolutized. The author moves away from reality towards an illusion of reality, from profane time towards sacred time; Al-Hakim's cave is the sacralization of profane time because it turns humans into saints, the cave into a temple. The state of being-in-the-cave is fixed and eternalized, abolishing the possibility of emerging from the cave. And the cave, expression of cultural identity as defier of time, is turned into an end, an absolute, while in the Platonic allegory it was a means of conquering the world.

The foregoing models, despite their diversity, reveal a certain unity of vision which fixes the past and absolutizes time, and, consequently, negates the future vision necessary for change. This stagnation is the result of the rejection of modernity and logos, and the preservation of an authenticity founded on mythos as the basis of cultural identity. This back-ward-looking vision which shapes and guides the plays content is moulded in a circular, repetitive form that determines the structure of the play, and exhibits the closed system that characterizes the authors' mythical Weltanschauung.

Finally, if the history of drama reveals a dialectical evolu-

tion from mythos to logos, corresponding to and reflecting the history of human civilization, it appears from the three foregoing models that Egyptian drama demonstrates only one side of the dialectic and a specific level of such evolution, namely, mythos. The mythical world view, reflecting the traditionalist attitude of the dramatists, is undialectical : it eliminates logos and is incapable of surpassing mythos as a basis of identity. The result is the absence of a real communication between Egyptian and world drama (whether European, American or even some Third World drama). Consequently, comparative drama in this case becomes an illusion. For a real comparison between civilizational products necessitates a minimum level of communication whereby a cultural dialogue can be established. But between European and Egyptian drama (and possibly Arabic drama) there can only be a monologue due to the negation of a basic dimension of European culture : logos. The result is that the contact between European and Egyptian drama is based on cultural confrontation rather than on creative (i.e. critical) assimilation.



CULTURAL IDENTITY AS DEFIER OF TIME : THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

This paper is concerned with two issues, one theoretical and deals with identity crisis, the other a case study of two literary texts: Taha Hussein's **Adib,** and Tawfik Al-Hakim's **Cavemen.** The purpose of the case study is to locate the identity crisis, which is formulated in the first novel, and to analyse and interpret the cultural significance of the solution of the crisis as represented in the second work.

Identity, according to modern philosophy, is a term meaning that an object is the same with itself. "Cogito Ergo Sum", this Cartesian statement was questionable on the ground that how at each moment of thought can I vouch for the assertion that the "I" who thinks now is the "I" who was thinking. Without that assertion we have mere stream of consciousness, not identity or sameness. The clarification came from Locke through the amalgamation of consciousness with thinking :

> The identity of the same Man consists... in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by

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> constantly fleeting Particles of Matther, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body. Consciousness always accompanies thinking... in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the Sameness of a rational Being.(1)

On the other hand, a crisis by definition, is problematic and, hence, contradictory. Since identity involves a transformative stage of personality development, individual and collective, which may be considered as a qualitative shift, or the supersession of the contradiction to a higher level, the crisis of identity then signifies a contradiction that has to be superseded for the sake of realizing the qualitative transformation in the critical period of personality development and for the sake of maintaining a dynamic, rather than a static, identity.

The identity crisis tackled in this paper is not absolute, but is located within a particular time span covering the early three decades of this century. This period witnessed two major events: a tremendously rich intellectual upsurge, and the rise of the Egyptian novel as a literary genre.

The question, then, is :

Where does the contradiction lie ?

Adib (A Man of Letters) by Taha Hussein, is examined here as a model exemplifying this contradiction which is the underlying feature of the identity crisis.

Taha Hussein (1889-1973), surnamed "chief of Arabic literature", was the leader of the modernists in the 1920s and 1930s and a pioneer for his contemporary fellow writers and a father figure and literary patron to his subsequent generation. His contribution to Arabic literature cannot be measured only in terms of his works, but his real merit lies in the fact that he typifies the new liberal spirit in Arab thought that emerged in the first decades of this century. He made radical innovations in the Arabic style which surpassed the rigidity and elaborateness of Classical Arabic prose. His real contribution to Arabic thought, however, besides his translation of Greek and French classical works into Arabic, is his attempt to apply Western canons of criticism to Classical Arabic literature. It was in the mid-twenties that he made the big explosion within Arabic literary circles by publishing his book **On Pre-Islamic Poetry** (1926), which was reprinted in the following year with modification and an additional chapter on prose literature, under the new title **On Pre-Islamic Literature.** In this book, through the application of the Cartesian method, Hussein proposed and attempted to prove that the great bulk of pre-Islamic literature as it is known is largely later forgeries. The book resulted in an accute clash with the old-fashioned Azharites who regarded

it as an implicit attack on religious traditions, since it cast doubt on the accepted view of the environment in which the Prophet Mohamed received his revelation. The book was thus considered tentamount to heresy and was, consequently, banned and the author was forced to retreat and to withdraw his ideas.(2)

This early attempt was later revived in Hussein's major works of fiction,(3) written in the personal style which is almost documentary and autobiographical. These works, being written in a more indirect and implicit medium of expression, can be regarded as the alternative for the author's abortive experience. The pivotal idea in these works is the East-West cultural confrontation or the contradiction between a desired unity of the two worlds into one and an actual separation which preserves the gap between the two antithetical worlds.

This idea is most strongly and accurately embodied in **Adib,** subtitled "A Western Adventure". The novel is written in the form of letters addressed to the author by an unidentified friend, who is the protagonist, and intermingled with the author's own comments and meditations on the events, ideas and situations implied in the letters. The main events of the novel take place between the years 1910 and 1917, yet the work was first published in book form only in 1935. The author had preserved his friend's letters for almost thirty years after which he decided to publish them as a tribute to his friend's memory.

The narrative is a flashback, or the present considered through a rear-view mirror of the past which exhibits the dialectical relation between past and present through the mediation of the letters. The protagonist is an Egyptian middle-class intellectual who lives at the critical period of civilizational transformation at the turn of the twentieth century, and whose only dream is to go to France on a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne. In Paris, however, although he excells in his studies, he suffers from a deep and acute cultural shock. As a result he indulges in the pleasures of modern European life to the extent of insanity and ultimate death. The character of the protagonist is a prototype which recurs in many works of contemporary Arabic literature, particularly Egyptian literature.(4)

He is a variation on the character of the Egyptian intellectual who suffers the negative consequences of cultural confrontation with Western civilization. This character represents a typical case of alienation : he is an extremely sensitive poet who perceives the world through his poetic faculties by transforming his life-experience into poetic-experience, that is by transforming them into words, metaphors and images. He thus feels alienated from his own environment where he grew up in the Egyptian country. He is rejected by his own people who scorn his poetic tendencies and are repelled by his ugliness of face. In France, although he feels at a moment that he nearly realised his ambition, he is ultimately rejected by the French society which cannot absorbe him.

He, thus, feels total alienation : alienation from his homeland, and alienation from the new society where he has transplanted himself after uprooting himself from his original culture. He can neither assimilate the new culture to which he does not belong, nor can he totally give up his root-culture. His crisis is one of identity which involves the inability to resolve the problem of traditional heritage and modern practices. He feels eternally pulled between two worlds and cannot have a firm sense of identity necessary for building a new personality.

In once of his turbulent arguments with his friend over his decision to divorce his wife before leaving for Paris and his determination to have full freedom to indulge in the pleasures of Parisian life, the author, in a tremendous outrage, strongly condemns his friend's attitude and accuses him of blasphemy and heresy. However, after regaining self-control, he ponders on the experience saying :

> When I gradually came back to my self, I felt my turban on my head and my 'jubbah' and 'kaftan' on my body, and I remembered that I am a sheikh and an Azharite, that I have spoken to my friend in the language of a man of religion, that my friend was making fun of me and putting me back in my right place after I had disappointed him. I discovered that my study at the university under the European pro-

> fessors, my talks with my friend, my readings of European books, my attempts at innovation and my rebellion against al-Azhar and their accusation of heresy, all this was nothing but a delicate veil that could not withstand the first trial. I am just a typical Azharite who has swallowed the books of religion and inherited the legacy of the past and preserved it in his heart throughout thirteen centuries... I felt all this because my friend discovered that I am still an Azharite in spirit, heart and mind, who considers indulgence in the European life a sin.(5)

This shocking self-critical realization is the result of the author's understanding and assessment of the East-West experience. The logical conclusion of this realization is exemplified in the protagonist's tragic end as a result of an acute case of schizophrenia.

Francis Macnab records after a life-long experience with schizophrenic patients :

> The person who becomes schizophrenic is involved in an accumulating loss of confirmation of his being-in-the-world, and as an answer to this his participation in the world is diminished or distorted. On the other hand, the self, although chaotically divided, may assume the centre of existence, and the schizophrenic

> attempts to draw all things into it. His experience of reality in this case may be reflected in this withdrawal into himself where he appears to be overwhelmed by the world, and where it seems that he is persuaded that his identity can only be found by and in and through the self... In this sense the schizophrenic may be regarded as being in a decisionless state.(6)

On the verge of total insanity, due to an intense and uncontrollable sense of persecution (which is another major sign of schizophrenia), the protagonist writes to his friend explaining the reason of his own disease :

> I have a feeling that my upbringing in Egypt has led me to all that. For my upbringing was neither organized nor controlled by any clear or consistent origins. My life was extremely confused, driving me to the right and to the left and leading me, sometimes, to stagnation. Had I stayed in Egypt, I would have spent my entire life in utter confusion. But I crossed the sea to an environment where confusion is out of place and where such weak and confused souls as ours cannot possibly survive. Therefore, I could not tolerate the burdens, nor could I yield to its dictates or order. The war added to my confu-

> sion and my self lost its centre so to speak, and I became a toy to my whims.(7)

This accurate literary account conforms to the scientific diagnostic description of schizophrenia. The protagonist's dislocated or alienated identity — expressed in the phrase "my self lost its centre" — is the key to the understanding of the identity crisis, being the pivotal theme of the novel. In other words, the schizophrenic mind which Hussein registered to accurately through the character of his friend, whose name he deliberately concealed, can be assessed and interpreted by adopting the principle of interpreting the lower through the higher. The lower in that case is the schizophrenic character as represented in **Adib** and the higher is contained in Hussein's later preoccupation with propagating the philosophy of Décartes and the Cartesian method in the field of Arabic culture, and is fully expressed in his book **On Pre-Islamic Poetry**:

> I intend to introduce in literature the philosophic method propagated by Déscartes at the beginning of this modern age, to investigate the truth of things. It is well known to everyone that the basic rule of this method requires that the researcher should give up all formerly received knowledge and embark upon the subject of his research with a free mind. Let us adopt this method when we tackle our Classical

> Arabic literature and its history. Literature is in need of freedom... It should not be regarded as a religious descipline or a religious means and should be liberated from sacredness... Literature should be like all other sciences, subject to research and criticism, analysis, doubt, refutation and denial... The Arabic language should be freed from sacredness and become subject to the work of researchers as substance is subjected to the experiments of scientists.(8)

Further on he writes :

> If there is in Egypt today a group of people who support the old and another who are in favour of the new, this is because some of these people have been influenced by the European style, whereas others have only accomplished a small portion of that influence or none at all. The increasing dissemination of Western science in Egypt and the tendency of individual and social efforts towards spreading Western science will eventually make our minds European, which will make us study the Arabic literature and history in the light of Cartesian method as the West did with the Greek and Roman literature... The future is for Déscartes' method and not for the method of the ancients.(9)

Yet, after the famous clash with al-Azhar authorities and the alleged charges of heresy which the publication of the book caused, Hussein was forced to ommit the majar ideas and modify others in order to tone down the critical fervour of the book. The ultimate consequence was that the author eventually withdrew his ideas. However, this experience has left its deep traces on Hussein, and this was the strong motive behind his attempt to revive it in his works of fiction, particularly in **Adib.** The novel is, in fact, a projection of the author's own dilemma through the alter-ergo, or the protagonist who represents the extreme liberal tendency both in thought and behaviour.

Having discarded the call for critical thinking through the application of Cartesian method, the author had to suffer the repurcussions of his early abortive attempt and his submission to the forces of traditionalism. This was around 1935, the year he published **Adib.** In this sense, **Adib** can be regarded as an apology for having discarded Western thought and succumbed to the dictates of Eastern traditionalism. The protagonist's tragic end is the extreme negative consequence of separating the two worlds. In this sense also, the author admits the preservation of the East/West dichotomy through the elimination of the Cartesian mind. Having done so, what remains is the schizophrenic mind as an expression of the Arab identity.

By rejecting the Western critical mind and preserving the Arab dogmatic mind, Hussein discards relativity which is the spirit of contemporary civilization and conserves the absolute,

preserving thus, the identity crisis unsolved. This insoluble dichotomy is strikingly described in the novel by the friend :

> You expect me to write you about my life in Paris. And so, indeed, I would have liked to do. But life in Paris cannot be described in books or letters, and you cannot possibly know what that life is except by living it. Yet I could express my feelings in Paris in a somewhat inaccurate manner... Go to the Pyramids... and penetrate into th depths of the big pyramid. You will not tolerate life in there, and you will feel a chocking sensation, and perspiration will cover your body, and you will be overcome by the feeling that you are carrying the weight of that big structure which is about to destroy you. Then get out of the pyramid and breathe the light fresh air. Then learn that life in Egypt is like living inside the pyramid and living in Paris is that life after you have emerged out of these depths.(10)

However, the author's persistence to solve the East/West dichotomy recurred in 1938 with the publication of his book **The Future of Culture in Egypt.** The pivotal idea in this book is the author's conviction that the independent Egypt must become part of Europe for that is the only way to become part of the modern world. He writes :

> Believe me, dear reader, our real national duty, once we have obtained our independence and established democracy in Egypt, is to spend all we have and more, in the way of strength and effort, of time and money, to make Egyptians feel, individually and collectively, that God has created them for glory not ignominy, strength and not weakness, sovereignty and not submission, renown and not obscurity, and to remove from their hearts the hideous and criminal illusion that they are created from some other clay than Europeans, formed in some other way, and endowed with an intelligence other than theirs.(11)

From this text it is abvious that Hussein is belittling the problem of religious difference, and this is due to the Cartesian method which he had adopted in his book **On Pre-Islamic Poetry.** For him the distinguishing mark of the modern world is that it has brought about an actual separation of religion and civilization. It is, therefore, quite possible to take the bases of civilization from Europe without taking its religion. This involves one condition, which is that Egyptians too should be able to make the same separation. This separation is the solution of the identity crisis because it will realise the supersession of the contradiction inherent in the crisis and achieve the qualitative transformation necessary for the creation of the new identity within which the desired communication between East and West is actually realised.

The question, then, is :

Is this possible ?

This hypothetical question has been fully answered in the negative as a solution to the identity crisis, but not in Hussein's novel, namely by another author in another work : Tawfik Al-Hakim's play **Cavemen.** Yet, here the question of identity is given a different formulation by moving from the particular to the universal, or from the personal identity to the cultural identity, expanding thus the temporal space of the problem and transcending the limitations of historical time to suprahistorical or, strictly speaking, mythical time.

The new formulation of the identity crisis in Al-Hakim's **Cavemen** illustrates an involution from the epistemological cave to the cultural cave.

Plato, in his **Republic,** chooses the parable of the cave to illustrate his doctrine of Forms in a most dramatic scene where the cave represents the place, the prisoners the dramatis personae, epitomizing the condition of human beings, that is, the state of being captive to an illusion of belief in a shadow of truth which they uphold as the absolute truth itself. But what is most remarkable in Plato's dramatic scene is the deliberate elimination of one of the basic elements of dramatic action, namely, time.

In Book VII of the **Republic,** speaking about human nature in its education and want of education, Socrates likens it to a condition which he describes in the following terms:

> Picture men in an underground cave-dwelling, with a long entrance reaching up towards the light along the whole width of the cave; in this they lie from their childhood, their legs and necks in chains, so that they stay where they are and look only in front of them, as the chain prevents their turning their heads round. Some way off, and higher up, a fire is burning behind them, and between the fire and the prisoners is a road on higher ground. Imagine a wall built along this road, like the screen which showmen have in front of the audience, over which along this wall all kinds of articles which overtop it, statues of men and other creatures in stone and wood and other materials; naturally some of the carriers are speaking, others are silent... They are like ourselves.(12)

Further on in the argument, Socrates supposes that one of the prisoners is released, forced to stand up and turn his head and walk and look toward the light, with the result that he is able to distinguish illusion from reality. He further supposes that this person goes back to the cave with the purpose of conveying the nature of his discovery while out of the cave to his fellow pri-

soners and persuading them to distinguish between the shadows of truth and the real world :

> And suppose that he had again to take part with that prisoners there in the old contest of distinguishing between shadows, while his sight was confused and before his eyes had got steady (and it might take them a considerable time to get used to the darkness), would not me laugh at him, and say that having gone up above he had come back with his sight ruined, so that it was not worth while even to try to get up ? And do you not think that they would kill him who tried to release them and bear them up, if they could lay hands on him, and slay him ?(13)

The irony implicit in this simile can hardly escape us if we turn to Socrates' own destiny in real life.

Anyhow, Plato's cave illustrates a specific aspect of identity which is located within the field of epistemology. He does so by relating human nature to knowledge. He says :

> In the world of knowledge the Form of the good is perceived last and with difficulty, but when it is seen it must be inferred that it is the cause of all that is right and beautiful in all things, producing in the

> visible world light and the lord of light, and being itself lord in the intelligible world and the giver of truth and reason, and this Form of the good must be seen by whosoever would act wisely in public or in private.(14)

Twenty centuries later, Francis Bacon tackled the epistemological aspect of identity within the spirit of his age, namely that of experimental science, through the images of the idols when he spoke about the art of judgement, dividing it into "analytics, and the doctrine of confutations, which he further divides into three parts, the third part, and the most relevant to our argument, being the confutation of images, or idols.

In Advancement of Learning (published 1605) Chapter IV, Bacon refers to Plato's parable of the cave when he presents the idols as being the "deepest fallacies of the human mind" because they proceed from a "corrupt disposition, or bad complexion of the mind, which distorts and infects all the anticipations of the understanding."(15)

> The idols of the den have their origin from the peculiar nature, both of mind and body, in each person; as from education, custom and the accidents of particular persons. It is a beautiful emblem, that of Plato's den; for, to drop the exquisite subtlety of the

parable, if any one should be educated from his infancy in a dark cave till he were of full age should then of a sudden be brought into broad daylight, and behold this apparatus of the haevens and of things, no doubt but many strange and absurd fancies arise in his mind; and, though we live indeed in the view of the heavens, yet our minds are confined in the caverns of our bodies, whence of necessity we receive infinite images of errors and falsehoods, if the mind does but seldom; and only for a short continuance, leave its den, and not constantly dwell in the contemplation of nature, as it were, in the open daylight. And with this emblem of Plato's den agrees the saying of Heraclitus; viz, that we seek the sciences in their own narrow worlds, and not in the wide one.(16)

Although both Plato and Bacon use the cave as a means for illustrating their theory of knowledge, the advancement from Plato's "cave" to Bacon's "den" demonstrates a kind of evolution within the epistemological level of identity. For, if Bacon in his "Idols of the Den" refers to the Platonic myth of people living in a cave and mistaking the shadows that pass before them for reality, in the "Idols of the Theatre" he objects to Plato's "fantastical philosophy" for being dogmatic because it confuses philosophy with theology or, as Bacon puts it, "springs

from an absurd mixture of matters divine and human."(17) This is due to Bacon's interpretation of Plato's philosophy within the spirit of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, that is, the scientific spirit. However, the purpose of the two philosophers was the emergence from the cave and the elimination of illusion with the ultimate end of conquering the real world by reason. the cave in Plato's case was a mythical one, whereas Bacon's den could be regarded as a scientific cave. Plato's cavemen in **The Republic** were struggling against knowledge of reality in order to preserve the illusion and, in real life, demanded the death penalty for Socrates after charging him with corrupting youth and not believing in the city's gods. The death penalty was an illusory protection against the imagined wrath of an invisible, uncontrollable and, therefore, mysterious power which threatens to demolish their whole being, their human identity. The reason for this feeling of insecurity was man's limited control over the forces of nature due to his relatively primitive knowledge of the laws that govern the cosmos.

Al-Hakim's **Cavemen** is an excellent case in point demonstrating an attempt, within the field of literature, to solve the crisis of cultural identity by re-mythifying the cave. Cultural identity here is presented in the Quranic parable of the cavemen (cited in the sura of "The Cave"), where the three political and religious dissidents seek refuge in the cave away from the dictatorship of the emperor, and are joined by the shepherd and his

dog. Cultural identity is determined by the cave, and the emergence from the cave results in an identity crisis. If epistemological identity, as defined by Plato and Bacon, shows an evolution from mythos to logos, the cultural identity as dramatized by Al-Hakim represents an involution from logos to mythos.

This is because the conflict between the epistemological and the cultural cave, as represented in the play, is solved by the elimination of the epistemological dimension and the preservation of the cultural one. Hence, Al-Hakim moves away from reality towards illusion of reality, and from profane time towards sacred revalatory time. In other words, Al-Hakim's cave becomes th sacrelization of the profane time, mixing "matters divine and human", because it turns humans into saints, the cave into a temple. By doing so the state of being-in-the-cave is fixed and eternalized, abolishing thus the possibility of emerging from the cave. And the cave, becoming the defier of time, is turned into an end, an absolute, after it was in the beginning just a means of conquering the world, although by means of illusion, for in this case even the illusion of conquering the world becomes a taboo.

Although Al-Hakim uses the fable to rationalize mythology, he ends up by aborting his own attempt. He does so by absolutizing time. The final absolutization of humans by turning them into saints, removes the effect of humanizing them throughout the play.

NOTES

1. John Locke. **Human Understanding**, Vol. II. Ch. XXVII. p. 6, 9.

2. His first work in this line was **Hadith al-Arba'** Wednesday Chats) on Ommayad and Abbassid poetry; **Ma'al-Mutanabi** (With Mutanabi). His ideas on education and literary criticism are expressed in **Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi Misr (The Future of Culture in Egypt).**

3. These are **Du' a' al-Karawan** (The Call of the Curlew. 1934), **Adib** (1935), **al-Ayyam** (The Days, an autobiography in three parts), Part I appeared in 1927, Part II in 1939.

4. E.g. Tawfik al-Hakim's **Bird from the East** (Asfour minal Shark), Yehia Hakki's **Om Hashim's Lamp** (Quandil Om Hashim); Taiyeb Ṣaleh' **Season of Migration to the North.**

5. Taha Hussein, **Adib,** Cairo, Dal al-Ma'arif, 1965.

6. Francis Macnab, **Estrangement and Relationship** (Social Science Paperbacks, London, 1965).

7. **Adib.**

8. Taha Hussein, **Pre-Islamic Poetry** (al-Shi'r al-Jahili), Cairo, 1926.

9. **Ibid.**

10. **Adib.**

11. **The Future of Culture in Egypt,** (trsl.) Albert Hourani, Oxford, 1961.

12. Henry Davis (trans.), **The Works of Plato** Vol. II (London, Henry Bohn, 1854).

13. **Ibid.**

14. **Ibid.**

15. Francis Bacon, **Advancement of Learning** (Oxford University Press, London, 1938).

16. **Ibid.**

17. **Ibid.**

18. T. Al-Hakim, **Cavemen** (Dar Al-Ma'arif, Cairo).

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